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MODERN LOVERS

MODERN LOVERS

BY

VIOLA MEYNELL

Author of "Second Marriage"

BOSTON

THE FOUR SEAS COMPANY

1919

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MODERN LOVERS

CHAPTER I

I

MILLICENT and Euphemia Rutherglen reached home at about eight o'clock on an early summer evening. But summer had a cold east wind, and an icy rain fell down from the clouds that moved about the mountain-tops. Their home was in that northern part of England where a night's frost in summer does not damage the barren fields, or perturb the mountain sheep.

They had come that day from the middle and south of England, each relinquishing a teaching-post—one in a London suburb, one in a small provincial town—to join their father and mother in a newly acquired home. They beheld an old-fashioned house, two sides of a square in shape, washed very pink, and with a rough slate roof of the country-side's producing. The thick rugged slates looked loose and unfixed as if they stayed in place merely by virtue of their weight. The house lay by the side of a narrow flat road which had no border above its own level, but a sunken one in the form of swift purposeful streams, running no wider now than the width of a man's arm, but noisy and very cold.

The girls, having arrived at a station called Redrith by successive trains, had driven together for nine miles in a lumbering carriage drawn by two enormous thin horses. When the carriage was emptied the old

thin horses started back again at their unvarying pace, which was about as fast as a man's quick walk; they had not changed their pace for years, and never would change it again.

Mrs. Rutherglen met her daughters in the hall after a few moments during which it had seemed as though no one were conscious of their arrival. She looked young and blooming, and was full of little excitements. She did not give the impression of being excited actually at seeing her daughters: it was as if their home-coming had sufficiently elated her to enable her to be excited about other things.

"I've got a fire for you in the sitting-room," she said. "The kitchen-range caught fire last night." She remembered to kiss them, each in turn. "You never saw such a business as we had. Whatever I should have done," she said, raising her voice to a tone which might easily be overheard, "if dear papa hadn't been here I don't like to think. Papa is in the study but we won't disturb him; I dare say he'll be out soon."

It was the girls' invariable habit in speaking to Mr. Rutherglen to call him father if they called him anything; the fact that their mother always spoke of him to them as "papa" was one of the incidents of home life which they silently but persistently resented. Millicent, the elder girl, took off her hat and coat and tossed them on the floor for want of better accommodation. She threw back her head as if to relieve herself of the oppression of the journey. She did not appear to feel the least necessity to listen to or reply to her mother's chatter.

In the sitting-room Mrs. Rutherglen spoke in an impressive whisper.

"Don't tell papa that you had the carriage from the station. Days and days ago he told me to write to Reade's. But I've been so busy; it isn't any

wonder that I forgot till yesterday, and then it was too late. Now mind, there's good girls. Of course I don't want you to tell a lie."

They both said: "Very well, mamma," and looked round the lighted room. They were now in turn inspected by their mother with a kind of covert criticism which was cheerfully unfavourable. She thought Millicent's beauty was not so bright as it had been six months ago, and Euphemia looked changed by the illness she had just recovered from. Her hair, having been shortened in her fever, was now done in a new way, hanging smooth and straight round her head and turned in evenly round the bottom so that she looked like a mediæval youth.

Mrs. Rutherglen smiled with unusual warmth at them as they stood strangely in the new room. They were not unlike in feature and bearing, and were beautiful with a kind of guileless unconscious beauty which was apt to make a spectator think that his admiration was his own superior idiosyncrasy.

Millicent gave a fitful glance round the room and went straight to the fire.

"Well, mamma, as usual you never wrote."

"Writing is so tiresome, dear, when there's nothing to say. And think of the rush papa and I had to get here; to do everything in we only had barely the month;—well, you might say the house was offered to us in the one week and in the third week we were here."

"Does he expect us to go and search for him?" asked Euphemia.

"He'll be here presently," said Mrs. Rutherglen. She was still examining her daughters, and she had an inconsequential way of beginning to speak in the middle of her thought. "And how strangely it's growing again, dear, with that straight fringe right across your forehead. Anyone would take you for a

French girl, Effie. No, don't go and find papa; he'll be here all in good time."

"What do you think?" asked Millie, looking with her straight cold glance at her sister. Mrs. Rutherglen was singularly ignored.

It seemed to be a matter of rather fearful importance. Effie weighed it for a few moments.

"He knows we're here," she said, and they left it at that.

Now the two girls were both crouching by the fire. But they did not exchange any glances of friendliness or understanding. Their eyes had met in a long look as they considered about their father, but there was nothing affectionate or frank in their intercourse. Or the only frankness was that there was no pretence of affection.

"I think it's a doubtful kindness, your fetching us home, mamma," said Millicent. "You might have had one of us! I don't see why both."

"Papa did say one at first, and then when I asked him which, he said both."

"So that you would be sure to have the one you want, I suppose," said Millie with her repressed scorn.

"Oh no, not that," said Mrs. Rutherglen; and Effie, so literal and unimaginative sometimes in her understanding, joined in: "Oh no, it wouldn't be that, more likely the other way."

"Nonsense, dear," said Mrs. Rutherglen. "I think he thought that if there were two of you, you would be able to keep together, and leave me more for him."

II

Mr. Rutherglen was a heavy man with a coarse expression—one who made a rather palpable display of his weight and bodily importance by many aggressive habits of sinking heavily into chairs and stretching out his legs, and being so little agile that he did not

turn his head to anyone who spoke to him. His utter self-possession was carried to that point when it becomes a tyranny and an offence. Mrs. Rutherglen called him "Jack, dear," and was even playfully affectionate with him; she talked over the news with him every morning, and went to bed with him every night. She managed somehow.

After supper the family sat in the sitting-room, and between long silences the girls—having related the incidents of their day's journey—proceeded to some reminiscences of the teaching situations from which they had just come. Millie talked more than usual because she was excited by loneliness.

Mr. Rutherglen sat in an easy chair, facing the middle of the fire. No other chair came within two yards of his, but a whippet sprawled close to his feet, not minding a bit how close. She slightly pricked her ears, though she did not go so far as to open her eyes, whenever her master spoke. Mr. Rutherglen was reading a certain north-country sporting journal, but occasionally he broke into the conversation with his persistent, indolent voice.

"If it had been a large school I suppose there must have been some one decent there," said Millicent. "But there were only the twenty pupils, and Miss Rand, and that dreadful Frenchwoman I told you about, who used to fight with me at every meal. . . . We couldn't bear each other—I really don't know why. We fought in French, and I think I can fight with anyone in the world in French now; she had a remarkably wide vocabulary for such a stupid woman. I can wonder at myself now, but I have refused to pass that woman the mustard, and thought I was scoring a real triumph."

During any remark, or at the end of it they all three invariably glanced at Mr. Rutherglen to see if his face showed anything. In many years it never had.

"Yes, it was never the actual teaching that I minded a bit," Euphemia agreed. "It was all the people getting on my nerves. To be so cooped up with people you hate——"

"Did Reade's horses bring you along decently?" interrupted Mr. Rutherglen.

"Yes, father," said Millicent, looking at him with her truthful eyes.

And Euphemia said exaggeratedly: "Yes, *very* well."

After a little pause Mrs. Rutherglen said rather hastily: "And this Miss Rand, dearie—didn't you get on well with her either?"

"No," said Millicent; "I didn't indeed. She was absolutely unattractive, and besides, she didn't like me. There is one thing to be said, though. One resents not being liked, and yet it would be infinitely worse if one were. That Frenchwoman, for instance—I'm glad that it was an abusive vocabulary that I learnt from her, instead of one of endearment." Millie still talked for her own benefit, to sustain her spirits if possible.

"Yes, there's a good deal in that," said Euphemia, "when you come to think of it. That fits in with my feeling exactly. I could not have stuck on so long with my people if they had made any claims on me."

"They've grown great girls, haven't they, Jack, dear," said Mrs. Rutherglen. "They'll be making you and me feel quite old."

"They won't make me old unless they talk too much," said Mr. Rutherglen.

There was a silence. Mr. Rutherglen occasionally turned a page of his paper, and the others wondered, as they sat and watched what they could see of the dying fire, if what he was reading was pleasing or displeasing him. At last Euphemia, whose thoughts had gradually wandered away, said:

"I must say that Mrs. Sharpe was quite kind to me when I was ill, mamma, before I went to the hospital. But you know I felt——"

"They've come here to be useful," said Mr. Rutherglen deliberately, "and I hope they understand that they've got to learn to save money if they're not going to earn it. Well now, Annie, come to bed."

The two girls, both tired, both discontented with what they had found, exchanged a cold good-night and went to their rooms. But one of them poured out her heart in a letter before she went to sleep. One candle still burned when all the rest of the house was in darkness; it made a little local light in a large bleak room. No bright light shone on that secret; no sigh, or hurried breath, or half-spoken word gave any hint of that secret; it was buried in a grave of passionate discretion.

III

"My darling,—It has been a kind of death to part from you—but do you know what made it all much more dreadful even than it need have been? I must tell you, or I shall never have any peace. All the time I was taking that long journey here I thought I did not love you. I thought it had all been a mistake; it seemed as if it was a relief to be coming away. If you are very wounded, just imagine what I suffered when I became myself again. I was tormented by shame and sorrow. I cried in the carriage when, after leaving the train, I drove nine interminable miles here in light and dusk and semi-darkness along the endless roads. As I came by the deserted fields and saw the bareness of the landscape and the terrible look of the mountains and the dreary rain all my love came back, and I cried to think what a demon had been in my heart. Will you forgive me and take me to your heart again? Or else I shall die. I really can hardly bear it all here.

"My sister was sitting beside me in the carriage. We did not speak much, though we have not met for so long. She leaned forward and looked out of the window, but I sat back, overcome with the bitterness I had made for myself. She turned round and looked at me with a kind of calm curiosity when first she heard me cry, and then turned to the window again. She has never seen me cry before, or not within my memory. And then soon I was quiet because I promised myself your forgiveness. And so we reached home.

"I won't write about it or about father and mother. Oliver, it wasn't a home-coming remarkable for any great exhibition of love or excitement; I think that if I am in a mood for those things I had better turn and think of you instead. Do you remember how very quickly I loved you—when you had only looked at me a few times with your kind eyes, and said unimportant little things? I like to think how very quickly I loved you.

"Well, you mustn't mind if I write about you and all that I have left behind, rather than of what is here. I want all that is left behind to be so real to me. I go over and over in my mind a kind of mechanical list of the things in your office. I am so afraid of beginning to forget. I have got such an absurd memory. I go over all the things, one after another, each in its place. I begin with that high shelf behind the door, where there were some boxes of typewriting paper, I think, and an enormous bottle of ink. I begin with that because I never noticed it very much, and so that is where I would be likely to start forgetting. But you see I don't want to start anywhere.

"And then I always come to you; I see you plainly —but I can't make you change your expression, which is foolish of me.

"I think everything that has been terrible in our

situation has surely been nearly atoned for by our happiness. And so we will be quiet and wait and write to each other.

"Good-bye, my dear, my darling; I send you my love to-night."

CHAPTER II

I

You will have gathered from these humble circumstances that the Rutherglens are not distinguished by any kind of social importance. Such a conclusion could only be very painful to Mrs. Rutherglen if she were to learn of it.

She belonged to a quite glorious family, though to an inconspicuous branch. It was a family that had not only titles and riches, but also academic honours, and distinguished letters after its names. At the present time there were several men belonging to it who were so famous as scientists and politicians that the uninitiate might well suppose their titles to be a grateful country's reward of merit. Not so, however: the titles were just a splendid accident thrown in. There was a certain splendour about the concentration in this one family of enough qualifications to make several families conspicuous and honourable.

The family had its obscure members, whom the outstanding benefits passed by. But their obscurity was not like other people's obscurity; there was only a flimsy screen between them and the public eye. Years might perhaps go by in which England showed itself to be curiously lethargic in the interest it took in the relations of its more prominent public men, but all the same they felt very near the light.

Mrs. Rutherglen's father, Hugh Tracy, had been one of these semi-obscure people, and in regard to this matter of publicity he had always taken a firm line. His family was familiar with his views on

domestic privacy, and with his determination never to sacrifice it. He was apt to point to the case of his eldest brother. Here was a man whose movements were reported in the papers in a manner dangerously bordering on the familiar, and who on the purely personal occasion of a ninth daughter being born to him was the subject of posters in the London streets. That may be all very well for people who are not of a retiring nature, but there are still those left who value the sacred seclusion of family life beyond anything that notoriety can offer. That was briefly Mr. Tracy's standpoint.

And yet on one occasion he had come very near to an abandonment of his position. His cousin, Lord Willingham, had mysteriously disappeared, and England was looking for him. An interview with some member of the missing man's family was the kind of thing a newspaper could hardly afford not to have. In the country place where Hugh Tracy lived a rumour came to him (through the doctor, who had a friend on the local *Culverwell Courier*) that an interviewer would be sent over from Culverwell to ask Mr. Tracy if he could throw any light on this painful mystery. Mr. Tracy complained bitterly of the way in which they had tracked him down in his retirement; England would soon be as bad as America. However, on the day when the interviewer was expected he remained all day in his study, and put away books about Mr. Jorrocks, and threw down on the table his school copy of Virgil. A few happy phrases occurred to him which he should not be sorry to see in print the next day. He imagined himself saying: "I always find myself returning to the classics; there's nothing like them really, you know." For some reason or other the interviewer never came.

This Mr. Tracy was not a rich man and he had a large family. He did not have good fortune with his

children. Two of his sons badly squandered his money in their college days, and one of his daughters, already described as Mrs. Rutherglen, ran away with a man of inferior birth and fortune with whom she had unfortunately come in contact.

Mrs. Rutherglen had been more or less ostracised by her parents, but that fact did not dismay her, because in the tremendous sway of love and dawning fear which her husband exercised over her, it took only a short time to make her parents seem little, unimportant, far-away people, who might be shouting, but she scarcely heard what. No money came to her when her parents died, and that was a disappointment which suddenly gave to those little distant gesticulating figures an unpleasant importance and effectiveness. Mrs. Rutherglen's state and ambitions were gradually reduced.

She and her husband having been presented with a house, she had called her daughters home against her will. She thought a great deal about her relations, with that strange mixture of rather rancorous envy and acute interest which belongs to a weak mind not sure of its own resentments. She often felt as if they were a critical invisible audience watching her; she felt it so strongly sometimes that she altered the expression of her face as she went about the house, and conducted herself with an air of simple unconscious virtue. Consideration of those imaginary censors made it necessary for the girls to be called home with the increase of prosperity. Otherwise one might be cruelly misunderstood, and considered guilty of want of maternal affection.

She loved her girls, but would have loved them better if they had not been hers. She had that curious close personal jealousy which makes some people unable to tolerate beauty in those who live with them and are connected with them, and who yet can admire and

emulate it if it is at all removed from them. She would have rejoiced to see the girls happy and prosperous and beautiful—but at a distance, and the greater the distance the more genuinely she would rejoice. She did not want to see them beautiful in her drawing-room, or rich for her tradespeople, or happy through triumphs greater than hers. She could be satisfied with the poorest and meanest of gratifications herself so long as there was not someone in immediate competition enjoying a greater one. She had fallen so low that it seemed to her a desirable thing to have that barren hearth of hers to herself.

She tried to make the best of their being at home, but she was most at her ease when they were out walking, or in the next room. Out of the spirit of competition she now had to take extra troublesome pains with her appearance, about which she was naturally lazy and too hopeful. When her daughters were in the room she felt obliged to assume a beautiful expression, which was a labour.

During one of the long dissatisfied meditations which Mrs. Rutherglen indulged in over her fancy-work, she had one of the bright though simple ideas that occasionally lit up her mind as with an almost unnatural light.

II

Young as they were, she hoped they would marry—not an extravagant hope for the mother of those two. She was prepared to sink herself entirely in that interest, for the sake of the long peace that would follow. When they were gone she would no longer be goaded to unwelcome effort by their presence. She would be able to wear her loose grey jacket in the mornings again—yes, and feel beautiful in it.

She considered the possibilities of the neighbourhood. A mile away as the crow flies, through a forest on a

hill, there was the large walled-in house where her cousin, Mrs. Ingram, lived; it was she who was the donor of their present quarters. From that house of great splendour, with many people coming and going, it might confidently be expected that social intercourse would be marked by the usual adventures.

And a few miles away between the ranges of hills there lived a man called Harry Adams, connected by marriage with Mrs. Rutherglen, and the nephew of Mrs. Ingram. He lived alone in a small but rather pretentious house; he owned acres and acres of the unproductive fields, and many a flock of the wild, timid sheep upon the mountains were his. In thinking it over, Mrs. Rutherglen came to be as nearly certain that he would marry one of her daughters as one can be of any future event in so unsatisfactory a world. The only doubt was as to which daughter it would be. Millie was the older by a year and a half; she seemed strangely restless, and no doubt would welcome such a change of life. And she was a person of more active power than Effie.

Mrs. Rutherglen tried the effect of certain sounds on an imaginary audience which was freely sprinkled with her relations.

"Mrs. Adams," she said. "Millicent Adams. Millie Adams. Euphemia Radams."

III

"My darling,—I told you it was only just that once, and for that little while, and I told you how much I myself suffered at the memory of it. And now you spend a whole letter on a thing that is past, when you know it can only be a sadness and bitterness to remember it. I so much wanted something bright and peaceful and *strengthening* from you; it is so dreadful here. Yes, I can say all that you wish me

to say. I can promise it will never happen again; I will love you all the time.

"I never, never want to worry you. I imagine you to-day going about looking worried, as I have seen you once or twice. You show it so plainly in your eyes and in something cross and discontented in your forehead. It hurts me. Now let this quite reassure you.

"Every evening as it grows dusk I am with you in the little office. Do you remember the very first time I came, when I lit the gas, because I liked doing little things? And while I was doing that people came in, and I tried to be quite ordinary and accustomed in my manner. I believe I even tried to look dissatisfied and overworked—so that they could think I was your badly paid drudge if they liked. And you gave them particulars of houses and houses and houses! I can't fathom to this day the intellectual or financial position of a person who wants to hear about houses with rents from thirty to two hundred pounds. That is too much knowledge. I remember that woman's endless voice.

"This letter must go to you to-night, short as it is. While I was writing, mamma called me down to a visitor—a man who is staying with a cousin of mamma's at a big house near here called Skellow Grange. He came over to see us; he is a diver—what a strange coincidence! It made me long very much to say your name. He would probably have looked at me in great surprise and said: 'Do you know *him?*' And I should have felt very proud—but just about the most indiscreet person in the whole world.

"Now there is only just time to catch the post."

CHAPTER III

I

THE day after Clive Maxwell called for the first time he came again. He was a man of such conspicuous and quick attractions that any apology for coming again so soon would have seemed almost affectedly out of place—like a rich friend's apologizing for sending you money when you starve. His experience of life had not been of a kind to teach him diffidence; all episodes, and relationships, and physical and intellectual efforts had, on the contrary, taught him confidence. His history is a history of being loved—which might become almost tiresome in its sentiment. For he was a great man, with strength to fight enemies if he had any, and a tongue to utter effective scorn if anyone should accuse him unjustly.

He was very tall; his body had won him renown in many departments of athleticism; his hair was dark, his eyes grey. But he is very hard to describe by a chronicle of features; one could be faithful and yet leave him commonplace. For what made the deepest impression was the long fearless shy look from his eyes, which seemed both to question you and promise you. He made an inquiry and a pledge with his eyes, to which you suddenly felt yourself responding unconditionally in your heart.

The day after his first call, Millie and Effie, while not evincing the slightest desire for each other's company, did happen to be out walking together in the afternoon. They were both utterly tired of long hours

spent indoors, with the sound of rain blown against the panes, and the log-fire kept uncomfortably big to suit Mrs. Rutherglen's requirements of warmth.

Millicent had put down her book and dressed herself to go out without proclaiming her intention to her mother or Effie, whom she left in the sitting-room. This silence in regard to her movements was a little habit she had in common with her father. Mr. Rutherglen never announced his purpose in a friendly way. All his family could do was to watch him silently, and observe signs and make deductions. It was a matter of considerable importance to their feelings if, when he went out, they were to suppose him gone for half an hour or for three hours. "Had papa his stout boots on, did you notice, dearie?" Mrs. Rutherglen would perhaps ask. Or: "Did papa take his umbrella?" Or: "Did papa lock the study-door?" And one of the girls would have been certain to make careful observation of these portents.

But when Effie saw Millie in a rain-proof coat passing through the hall she felt a sudden tremendous envy, and wished she had thought of it first; because to go out in spite of the rain was, she now knew, the one thing that would relieve her sense of suffocation. Yet there was an awkwardness in imitating Millie, and still more in accompanying her.

"You know it's still pouring with rain?" she called, her envy almost making her wish that Millie would abandon the walk, at which Effie would herself slip out, rejoicing.

"I ought to know by now," said Millie coldly. "I have had some days in which to notice it."

"I shall go out too," said Effie. "Don't bother to wait."

"I suppose I may as well wait," said Millie impatiently, "but I wish you had got ready when I did."

And so they set out. They walked northwards between the hills, every step relieving them from oppression and tired warmth. They descended to the stony beach of the lake, and the leaden water dented slightly at the touch of each long drop of rain. The wind caught them here so that they could hardly proceed against it. They both remembered how important the rain-drops had sounded against the windows in the close stillness of the sitting-room—this foolish, inadequate rain, which in the great wind was only like what a black garment is in darkness, or a spark in fire. It could not even wet them thoroughly; when they turned to go home their coats were dark and wet in front, but light and dry behind.

They were transformed creatures as in the increasing wind they reached their home again. Sharp mountain air in their lungs, their limbs tired with energy instead of with lassitude, they came to their door, and shut it hard against the wind. Inside, the air felt warm just because it was still, and there were little noises of clinking dishes; some one was tending a fire, because there was the sound of bellows drawing in their asthmatic breath, and the flame rushing away. A groaning sound came from the kitchen which did not depress you once you knew that it was Jean singing.

Mrs. Rutherglen came out into the hall, shutting the sitting-room door carefully behind her.

"Mr. Maxwell is here," she said, "and he's going to stop to dinner."

Millicent, with an impatient glance at her mother because she had shut the door to whisper about a guest in the hall, went straight and opened it again. Millicent had a rather splendid careless way of throwing off her hat as soon as she came into the house. As she opened the door with one hand she pulled off her hat with the other, and threw it on to the first chair in the room. Her beauty was of an essential un-

arranged kind; she did not have to do things before a glass. Clive Maxwell was familiar in one moment with the very essence of what was attractive in her cool, free ways. No attraction ever left him unaware or unappreciative. He slightly pressed her hand; he did the same to Effie because it was his habit. He considered it so important to establish something real. Being a man whom people loved, he was accustomed to close relationships on every side of him, and he had come to be impatient of anything hampered by convention. "I find people so splendid!" he could not help saying often in his enthusiasm.

He scanned their straight figures in their wet coats, and the most natural beauty of their faces. He had recognized yesterday that they were the kind of people whom he made his friends. When Clive beheld a potential friend it was with him a matter of great enthusiasm and ardour.

"I'm glad you do this kind of thing," he said; "I'm glad you understand about weather."

"It was all right," said Millicent, "but you know I'm not actually going to say that I *prefer* rain."

"Oh, don't you?" said Effie, in a tone which suggested that she herself did. She had a weak readiness to pretend to have any opinion which she thought would dispose people favourably towards her.

"One likes one thing and one another," said Mrs. Rutherglen; "it's often the way. My own taste is a nice spring day when the birds are singing. And flowers—I love flowers. But, of course you can only speak for your own taste."

Effie slipped away and went upstairs to where Jean, the maid, had prepared a hot bath for her. As she opened the bath-room door she smelt the warm steam from the water, and the air was densely clouded with it. Her candle was almost eclipsed in the white

moving fog. Being always inclined to indulge her body's sensations, she took great pleasure in the fact that the water was really hot enough to warm her and refresh her after the long exposure to wind and rain. The warm smell of the steam brought a completing touch of gratification to a mind already stimulated by exercise, and pleased by the advent of an interesting man who had wonderfully pressed her hand, recognizing what she was.

She came down late for dinner, sitting too long in the bath. The intimate history of the bath-water was brief and eventful. It had recently fallen through the air on to the broad slate roof and from there into a wooden tub, which had been raided by Jean. It had made a close acquaintance with fire. And all the time it had been gathering little objects to itself—a wisp of straw from the roof, a bird's tiny feather from the tub, and from somewhere a little moth made of gold-grey dust, which it had drowned. And now it had gathered Effie. She set herself to the game of lifting out the dead moth with one finger. It eluded her in death with far more than the activity and ingenuity of life. And as she could not endure defeat even for a light whim—lured on by imminent success, and goaded on by failure, she was late for dinner.

II

Downstairs, in the meantime, Mrs. Rutherglen paid several urgent visits to the kitchen, and then sat again in the sitting-room, face to face with that strange baffling truth that to tell a certain kind of cook twenty times not to burn a thing is not to ensure that she will not do so. With plenty of talk between Millicent and Mr. Maxwell, they sat in the firelight and waited for dinner. So much talk was there that Mrs. Rutherglen had to listen for her chance to say something which

she wanted to say newly for the benefit of Mr. Maxwell.

There had that day been in the paper a paragraph which informed the public that Lord Newte had narrowly escaped death while shooting elephants in India. One elephant had circumvented certain death for a few moments, and through an unforeseen manœuvre had managed to get too near to his pursuer. "The vicious brute proceeded to strike out with his trunk at the intrepid sportsman," ran the account, "but a timely shot from one of the beaters put an end to its incontrollable rage, and incidentally saved Lord Newte's life."

After reading this Mrs. Rutherglen had been noticeably depressed for the rest of the day, exclaiming from time to time at the horror of the thing. She now asked Mr. Maxwell if he had read of it. He had.

"It's too terrible," said Mrs. Rutherglen; "I can't get it out of my head.

"I seem to see the great monster bearing down on him. And there he was—facing death.

"You see, being my cousin," she added with a wan smile, "it so brings it home to one."

III

"Oh that was a happy letter to get, my dear, my darling. But what a nuisance about that boy! I am glad you found him out; you might have lost pounds and pounds. I think deceit is dreadful, though don't you think one is sometimes driven to it? I dare say he had no excuse for it, however, which makes it very bad. The foolish boy had a good chance to get on, and now he has lost it. Oh, I strongly advise that you shouldn't prosecute. In fact I really couldn't bear to think of that.

"Now you will have to look out for a new Thomas—and what a succession of them there has been! Yes,

they are still all Thomases to me; I have tried so hard to remember their successive names; my brain empties itself of everything except Thomas. I remember—but I dare say you don't—how one day when you had heard me speaking to the boy of that period you said to me afterwards, a little exasperated: 'My *dear* girl, that particular boy's name happens to be Richard.' At that time those seemed to me very hard words; I thought you must have stopped loving me.

"Well, my dear, I did love hearing all your news.

"I broke off here, and now will finish my letter to-day, the posting day.

"I told you, I think, about a man who is supposed to be a great diver, didn't I? Well, he was telling me last night that at the lake here there is the most perfect diving-place. It appears that the cliff forms a series of natural steps overhanging the lake. I remember having noticed what he means. Well, these steps start on the lake level, and rise up to a height of a hundred and fifty feet. So I went this morning and looked at it more carefully. It certainly is very wonderfully arranged for you, just as you would have it. So I told the lake about you and your diving (but it says it cannot believe all that at once).

"You know when I saw you dive at the Blackdown competition I was so torn between longing and dread. I longed for you to go higher and higher, and yet I was trembling in my limbs with fear, and pressing my hands hard down on my seat, as if that would keep you from going up so high. I wonder if I shall ever be so thrilled again.

"This man last night was very voluble about diving, and was inclined, in a very charming way, to pose as a kind of world's champion. Again in my imagination I said your name, to see his look change and to hear him say: 'Do you know *him?*' Only French would

be sufficiently emphatic for my reply. 'Si je le connais!"

"We were in the garden, walking up and down the soft dark lawn. It had become fine after a wild day. I asked him about his diving. He said: 'I dare say the idea of diving as an art is new to you. You have perhaps only seen people who dive to reach the water. With us, of course,' he said, 'it is different. We dive to be in the air, and the splash is the mark of failure,' etc.

"Well, now, I am very glad to hear that you had such a good week. Business was bound to increase with the coming of better weather and the prospect of the holidays. Are you keeping well? I suppose that a certain tempering of our cold, wet winds is heat with you. I read of heat in the south. If I could stand with you in sunshine now! I think I could be very gay.

"But we are fairly happy here; the only thing is, we haven't got enough to do. It seems strange to be one's own disciplinarian and task-mistress. We have quite a nice house; here is a little drawing I did just to give you an idea, and I will send you some more—some of my famous interiors next time. Mamma's cousin, Mrs. Ingram, came to see us. It was she who gave us the house, for which my father has to give an exchange of services. All he has to do is to keep a supervizing eye on the great kennels of wonderful dogs up at Skellow Grange. My father has had great experience of dogs. Mamma is very funny. At first she thought her cousin was such a benefactress—as, of course, she is; and now already mamma begins to talk as if it were not we who have got the best of the bargain.

"Good-bye. I send you my love on what is really a very sweet evening."

IV

"My darling,—Very well; as you ask me to give you this assurance I will do so. I won't go alone into the garden with him again if I can help it; and I will never go alone with him in the evening. So is that all right? And now you will not worry any more. I little thought when I told you of that conversation that it would upset you. I never want to upset you, no indeed."

CHAPTER IV

I

MILLICENT had for two hours been playing the slow movements of some of the Beethoven sonatas. She liked the slow movements best, and besides she had long ago decided that the other movements were too difficult to play. At the end, she always ran her fingers over the first few bars of the next movement, so that one had a very tantalizing taste of it. At the first careless error she would desist, hum on for a few seconds, and then turn the pages to something new.

Effie stood by the window, looking down the road. For two days, since Mr. Maxwell's last visit, they had not seen anyone outside the family; Mr. Rutherglen had been more at home than usual, and the severe tension of his society made Effie long for some diversion. While Millicent played she stood at the window and watched the rain. It seemed incredible that no one in the world should think it worth while to come. Euphemia knew that the outside of the house had plenty of character and charm to make a good impression at the very outset (she always harped so much on the kind of impression made). Inside the house there were two girls who could probably talk with a visitor on just the subject that most interested him whatever it might be. Walking up to the house, he would gradually distinguish the notes of the slow movement of the Kreutzer Sonata, played with great dignity and feeling. Surely that in itself was a thing that did not happen at every chance call a man might make. And yet no one came.

Effie returned to the little table at which she had been sitting before, where a book called "Italian Self-taught" was still lying open in the hope of recapturing her attention. When she made the move from the window to the little table, Mrs. Rutherglen, who was sitting by the fire, said: "Don't fidget, dearie!" a remark which, while it was so manifestly absurd that it was not worth arguing about, still rankled on and on in one's mind. Ten minutes later the bell rang.

Mr. Adams, who was announced, had heard the piano-playing, and tactfully turned that fact to conversational account.

"It's quite a treat for me to hear the piano," he said. "That's the worst of living in the country."

"Do you know it?" asked Millie. She replayed a few bars, not looking at the music but in her cool, steady way at his face.

"I don't know; I *think* I do; I'm not quite sure."

"How nice of you to look us up," said Mrs. Rutherglen. "Of course I've heard so much about you for a great many years."

"It's very nice of you to say so," he replied nervously. "I have about you too."

"In such a large family," said Mrs. Rutherglen, "it's really impossible to know every one personally. It's different in a small family."

"I know," said Mr. Adams.

"Still, there's quite a colony of us, you might say, springing up here now. What with Mrs. Ingram, and you, and us, there are the three separate branches settled in the neighbourhood."

"Yes, so there are!" said Mr. Adams, in a pleased surprised voice. After a moment's pause he said to Millicent: "I do wish you would play something."

"I will with pleasure; I wonder what you would like."

"Of course there are such heaps of things," said Mr. Adams, considering. "You know I'm awfully ignorant, though I've always been passionately fond of music."

"You're like me," said Mrs. Rutherglen. "I don't know anything about it, only that I know what I like."

"There's a thing I remember liking awfully," said Mr. Adams, "by Chopin. It had a very slow, soft part—a lovely little thing."

"I wonder," said Millicent thoughtfully, "if I know it. Not this one, I suppose?"

Mr. Adams listened carefully. "No, that's not quite it," he said; "no, it's slower than that."

"*What* a pity!" said Effie in her exaggerated way, so as to impress him with her friendly concern. "We *must* find out which one it is."

Millie went on trying various things, and the quiet pains she took was much more impressive than Effie's over-solicitous tone and deprecating, anxious look.

At one piece Millie played his face lighted up responsively, and then became doubtful and finally decisive. Success had come to lie not in the finding of the piece, but in his ability to make up his mind. "No," he said triumphantly after his indecision. "That's rather like it, though." The thing had become an embarrassment and a nuisance. Millie played one more before putting an end to what bored her. "Oh, but please don't trouble," said Mr. Adams; "play anything."

"I hope my girls will see a lot of you," said Mrs. Rutherglen later. "I think young people should be together. With the best will in the world, their father and I can't be to them quite what young people of their own age are."

He left them more impressed with something clean and honest in his countenance than with his wit.

When he went to the front-door to go out, two sheep-dogs sprung up to meet him; and as he walked away with the dogs at his heels they all made a little forest of legs. The dogs were exceedingly alike and were chained together by the neck, because one had a roving disposition and the other not—a simple argument in favour of the predominance of good.

II

By eight o'clock any morning all the Rutherglens were astir, and with almost uniform punctuality assembled in the dining-room for breakfast. Mrs. Rutherglen found eight o'clock a difficult hour to keep. She sometimes said to the girls that if their father had required her to be down at seven every morning, or even at six, she wouldn't have grumbled or have experienced the slightest difficulty; but eight was excessively awkward. She was always provided with a circumstantial excuse to cover any unpunctuality.

One morning the two girls were the first to be seated at the breakfast-table. Their father came in. Euphemia looked down at her plate with a nervous interest in its contents; Millicent looked out of the window, while Mr. Rutherglen took his place. None of them spoke.

Years ago their father had had an attack of influenza—the only illness they had ever known him to have. During the brief but portentous time of his convalescence he had stayed in his room for the earlier part of each day and only appeared downstairs after lunch. Of course they did not say good morning to him then; obviously it would have sounded absurd —one does not, after lunch. Having stopped at that time, they had never said it since. Instead, some little

nervous absorption was always brought into play to cover his entrance.

Mrs. Rutherglen came in saying: "Good morning, Millie; good morning, Effie. I should have been down before any of you this morning but for my rheumatism."

It was at meal-times that Mr. Rutherglen was apt to discover such shortcomings in the quality of the goods provided as compelled him summarily to order a change of trader. In Redrith there were a quantity of shops vying with each other for the large scattered outlying custom of the district, and so Mr. Rutherglen's discontent was able to have effective expression.

But it was inexpressibly difficult for Mrs. Rutherglen to break off business relations which had been established on a basis of most respectful admiration on the one side, and of beautiful unbending on the other. When it was possible she circumvented the catastrophe; if it was not possible then she took the tradesman rather too much into her confidence at the back-door.

On this particular morning breakfast passed without any dangerous comment from Mr. Rutherglen, but when the meal was over, and Mrs. Rutherglen carried something for him into the study, the girls heard her voice raised in the cheerful, elaborate explanatory tones which they knew so well, and which indicated the attempted evasion of some unpleasantness, probably at the expense of truth. One glance at their mother's face when she came back would tell them whether she had been successful or not.

Mrs. Rutherglen alternated, in her manner to her daughters, between being quite open and explicit with them in regard to Mr. Rutherglen and keeping up before them the habit of pretence. It was as if she never could remember which of these two courses she generally adopted with them, or which she had adopted

last. And the result was that they got a strange jumble of both ways, Mrs. Rutherglen failing to realize the inconsistency.

Now when she came back to the sitting-room, where the girls glanced at her quickly, she murmured to them complacently as she sat down: "Never go against papa, darlings." So she had been successful. The girls did not answer, and yet as they could not entirely slight any thought about their father, each of them automatically responded to their mother's state of mind, rather than to her actual words by silent acquiescence.

Mrs. Rutherglen, with that kind of sigh which means suppressed satisfaction resumed the mending of a pair of stockings. For mending she believed in silk; the girls believed in wool. There was a little talk about that, though nothing new was said. In regard to this matter they said the same things at a decent interval of about a year. Millicent started casually though gravely quite at the beginning of the subject.

"Mamma, I've got some wool here; do ask me for it if you would like it."

"No, dear, I could never bring myself to put the labour into wool."

"How strange that you should think that," said Millie in a detached voice, and as if she were hearing it for the first time. "I am so convinced that wool lasts better."

"Well, really, dear, you've only to watch me trying to break the silk off the skein; it almost cuts my fingers. That wool breaks if you so much as look at it."

"That isn't the point, mamma," Effie began—but she subsided before Millie's more emphatic though infinitely patient enunciation.

"There is such a thing as being *too* strong, mamma.

I'm not saying your darn wears out; it's what happens round the darn."

"Like new wine put into old bottles," said Effie.

"Nonsense, dear," remonstrated Mrs. Rutherglen mildly; "that's quite a different thing; that's wine."

The door opened and Mr. Rutherglen looked round for his wife.

"Is it to-day they call from Killick's, Annie?"

Mrs. Rutherglen quickly assumed an expression of vague bewilderment.

"They're so uncertain, dear," she said. "They've taken to sending in on Tuesday now. I said to him only last week: 'It doesn't make the slightest difference to us when you come. So long as we know.'"

"Be sure to remind me on Tuesday," said Mr. Rutherglen. He closed the door, but opened it again to say: "It's about that coal. If you don't know what to say to him I can see him myself."

The door shut sharply, so that it sounded like a part of his voice—a new, unanswerable emphatic note. They all sewed in silence for some time.

"What day does papa go to Chesney?" asked Mrs. Rutherglen.

"Jean said she thought it was Monday."

"I thought so. Mr. Killick said he'd be round on Monday this week. No need to mention that, of course, there's good girls, with this notion papa's got."

Millicent was sitting in the low window-seat, with a fairly long view down the road. Dark clouds were rushing through the sky on a high wind, but every now and then the morning sun burst out for a few moments; it shone on Millie's bright hair and pale skin, and she looked a creature of rare beauty.

As she bent over her work she started suddenly at a sound, and looked up. She saw a coach with a solitary occupant coming heavily but swiftly along the road. Millie put down her work and was out of the

room in a flash. She was always very dignified in her movements, but her dignity did not cost her any time; it was consistent with rare speed.

She did not, in her secretiveness, say why she went. She had seen Mrs. Ingram approaching along the road in the small, noisy coach in which she liked to drive about the country. Millie quickly decided to be in her way and to speak to her. She was not the kind of girl to sit still under dissatisfaction and boredom; she would be sure to take determined, effective steps to find relief. She had been feeling particularly dissatisfied when she saw the coach. Any discussion with her mother always augmented all discontent; she wished she had been silent about wool; such a discussion was infinitely not worth her while; it was horrible to feel oneself sinking to the level of one's circumstances.

In five minutes she came back.

"It was Mrs. Ingram," she said; "I suppose you saw. She told me to go up to the Grange to see her this afternoon."

"Did she ask me?" said Effie anxiously.

"No, I can't say she did."

CHAPTER V

I

SKELLOW GRANGE was famous for its view and its gardens and its kennels. It was a house superior in size to any in the neighbourhood, but, architecture in that region being very unvaried, it had no accompanying distinction of style. It was just a large size of many other houses, with longer walls and more windows.

Merely to see on a large scale what was already familiar as an exterior style did not prepare you for the exceptional state that was maintained within. When Millicent entered that afternoon she was amazed at the elaborate luxury of this country-dwelling—the servants in livery, the rare furniture of a certain period, the hundred signs of expensive comfort and exquisite taste. Something seemed to swell in Millicent's breast in response to all this; she felt the need of surroundings such as these just as if she had once been used to them and had lost them. With an inward feeling of exaltation and with a proud carriage of her head and calm eyes she was shown into a large room where there was a quite considerable assembly of people.

Mrs. Ingram introduced her to a woman near by, from whom she learnt about the walks in the neighbourhood. Her companion's conversation being in the narrative style, Millie occasionally let her attention wander to what was being said and done around her.

Mrs. Ingram was a woman of about sixty, with hair drawn straight back from her brow, and eyes that still looked dark, but as if they had been darker in her

youth. Her ease was so absolutely assured that it seemed even to suggest detachment, but one felt that though her interest might not be excited here and now, she yet had been interested a little while ago, and soon would be again.

Not far from Millicent stood a carefully-attired elderly man, who seemed to ward off undue stoutness only by holding himself tremendously erect. He talked slowly and importantly; he was pleased, as he spoke, to catch Millie's eye on him; he was a man who reckoned on drawing in an audience.

"During the last few years," he was saying, "I have been approached from various parts of the country with the object of inducing me to stand for Parliament. For reasons which I need not at this moment elaborate, I have invariably sent an unqualified refusal. In some quarters I may have given offence, in others merely disappointment—that's as it may be." He cleared his throat. "Well," he said, "it is not impossible, certain events having occurred, that the same request might now meet with a more favourable reply." Millie looked widely round her with a sigh of tiredness and disappointment.

But all at once she had a splendid relief from more than threatened boredom. Behind her was a long bay window opening to the ground, and as the intermittent sun burst out, putting a glow over the room, Millicent's eye was attracted to look outside, where it had grown suddenly bright. Some white dresses out there had taken the sun very dazzlingly. Tennis was in progress on a perfect lawn; there was a middle-distance of flowers, and, behind, the blue mountains. The flowers grew very bravely on the edge of the steep drop into the valley, so that nothing interposed between their delicacy and the mountains' strength, and one looked past them and through them to stony mountains.

Millie tried to get an idea of the quality of the play. She was in a position to hope that it was very good.

But now what really sent boredom to the other end of the world was the sight of Clive Maxwell just outside the window detained by people who talked to him with great animation, but coming her way and with intent eyes fixed upon her. While he talked he still looked at Millicent in the window—as if to take his eyes off her for a moment would jeopardize his purpose. In all her being she felt how tremendously she was his intention. She thrilled under the delay, the certainty, the excitement.

He came at last. "This is most splendid!" he said very ardently. He seemed a height above her. His ardour was at great variance with her instinctive stillness. While she could not, now or in the future, violate what was so natural to her, she made it known, as she could so well do, that her silences were warm. She gave him quick, soft, understanding looks from eyes that agreed with him. But always in her glance there was something suppressed, because that was her habit.

"Follow me outside," said Clive. "I want you to stay for hours. Can't you stay for the whole evening?" The sun shone on them; a little wind blew their hair and clothes. They stood still and looked in each other's faces when they spoke.

"I can stay for a little while," said Millie, "and then I must go."

"Then come to-morrow. I want to see so much of you while I am here. If you don't know this house there are a lot of things which we must look at together. You know, we have got such a lot to learn about each other."

"Everything, I suppose."

"No, indeed. In fact," said Clive, "I am not sure

that everything is not known. Every moment that I look at you tells me so much."

"This is fatal," said Millie in her cool way. "I had not even arranged yet what aspect of myself to exaggerate or modify for you."

"Consult me in the matter," said Clive gaily. "I am already an authority on you."

"I am amazed at all the people," she said. "I had almost forgotten what people look like in numbers."

"I believe this happens once a month. Mrs. Ingram welcomes them in her way; that's to say, every one feels she would just as soon he came as that he didn't."

"Oh, but I know one man who doesn't feel it like that."

"The tall man with a public manner?"

"Yes."

"Millicent, did he talk to you about 'one's motor'?"

"No." She reddened because he had said her name.

A set of tennis was being played, and a few girls and young men were looking on. Clive and Millicent were being discussed by two girls who stood apart.

"I think she is more beautiful than anyone I have ever seen," said one.

"A new friend for Clive Maxwell," said the other with a touch of interested envy.

"She may be—but not if she is just beautiful and nothing else."

"What else does she have to be?"

"Oh, well, she must love water and birds and music and she must read the same books as he does; she must have what he calls 'the brave spirit,' to be very free and simple and unconventional." The girl who spoke was sensible and humble; she was one of Clive's friends, and worshipped him indulgently.

"I should have thought such a person was rather hard to come across," said the other.

"Oh no," said Clive's friend; "he has never found her at all hard to come across."

II

"How shall we play?" said a young man with a moist brow and an anxious countenance. He had been one of the victorious players in the set just finished, but had managed with carefully-concealed strategy to get himself included in the new set. He whispered as an aside to Miss Dixey (Clive's friend, who made one of the new four): "What's Miss Rutherglen's form, do you know?"

Millicent settled things herself in a very courageous manner. "Let me play against the strongest man," she said. "I feel inclined for a tremendous tussle."

The warm young man said to her: "Oh, then it's you and me. Which side? Let's not apologise, shall we?"—things which have been said before. He was eyeing her very anxiously. The world was nothing but an aching suspense to him until he saw her form. He cared as much as that.

"The worst of it is, you see," he said, "they're so used to playing together. What do you consider your best stroke?" His horrible state of anxiety was much more apparent than he knew.

Millicent smiled slightly. "Oh, I just make a dab at anything," she said carelessly. She was making a ball hop up and down on her racket. As she spoke she bungled it awkwardly and it fell and rolled away. The young man moped his brow.

The set attracted a considerable audience.

Perhaps before the end of this account of a part of Clive's life he will have grown to have the wider outlook which time and events must inevitably bring; but at

present he attached great importance to his own triumphs and ardours and fame. Being beaten in the game, he still found a way of appropriating victory to himself by his bright confident appropriation of Millie at the end. He very definitely allied himself with victory as he and she walked off together in great comradeship. The fact that the warm young man, reduced now to a state of almost pitiable admiration, was very difficult to discard, only gave an extra spring to their steps.

"You know we are to be such friends, you and I," said Clive. "I think there must once have been a time when I didn't know you, but I can't remember."

Millie, walking along beside him, only smiled.

"I feel something extraordinarily sympathetic in you," said Clive. "It's going to be very perfect. Do you feel anything in me that responds to your needs?"

Millie looked far away to one sharp lonely mountain-peak. "I feel happy," she said.

"Ah, you said that very nicely," said Clive, deeply satisfied.

"I ought to go," said Millie.

"No, no, not yet. There are things to show you; where shall we start? Or shall we not start?"

"I have just seen a splendid mastiff," said Millie, "and here comes another. Some day I should like to spend hours with these dogs."

"Yes, Millie, it is true we have a lot of dogs here, but this chap wants for some reason to give you an exaggerated idea of our population. You have been deceived by the homely manœuvre which makes a stage procession."

"Was it the same dog?"

"Yes, he scurried round the bushes and came strolling along again. He had you very nicely, Millie."

"It doesn't do him particular credit. The most repeating kind of stage procession always has me too. I even say to myself: 'Now I wonder where I have seen that face before.'"

They strolled about and turned back to the house.

"Mrs. Ingram doesn't seem very vital or alive," said Millie.

"No, she's had a miserable life; she's terribly apathetic."

"But not about you?" said Millie. She had seen Mrs. Ingram look at him.

Diffidence with Clive could only be a rather dishonest position. And he had in fact the habit of a very slight and very attractive dishonesty in the form of a humble self-effacing expression, which seemed to plead with you dumbly for tolerance and love. It was a look of humility from his extraordinarily expressive eyes. That look came now, to make a counter-effect to the rather self-appraising thing that he had to say.

"Well, in regard to me there *is* a little difference. One does what one can. There does seem to be a hope that affection and happiness have taken root in her again. She has been like an angel to me,—and not the least thing she has done for me is that she has let me make her a little happier."

"I am sorry for people who really suffer," said Millie with a slight shudder.

"Not to feel out towards people," Clive said after a pause, "not to meet spirit to spirit and thought to thought does seem to me to be the most monstrous condition of things, the negation of living. Suppose that you and I had met this afternoon, and had merely passed each other by in a tangle of formality and convention—oh no, I can't bear to think of that."

Millie's eyes gave him her quiet comfort. "We didn't," she said.

The guests had all gone when they returned to the drawing-room.

"Good-bye, Mrs. Ingram," said Millie. "Have I stayed too long?"

"No, my dear, I have been glad to see your face again. It is a beautiful face, Clive; it is so calm. I remember its calmness at unexpected moments."

"Well you see you are going to love her," said Clive. He put an arm on each of them in his most lovable privileged way. "We will all love each other," he said. He was very beautiful to look upon.

III

When Millie reached home her family had already eaten their early supper, and they sat in the sitting-room without any light but what still filtered through the windows. It was a late June day, almost the first to bring some warmth; but the evening of that kind of day can sometimes be nothing but a nuisance, because having ceased to be extra cheerful with sun it is extra cheerless without a fire, which does not seem justified. As Millie came in, with her bright dress very suggestive of absent sun and festivity, her family felt a certain resentment against her which was modified by curiosity.

"Well, dear," said Mrs. Rutherglen complainingly, "you shouldn't say you are going to tea and then stay so late. You never think of the anxiety. . . . . Who was there?"

"Oh, a few people."

"Did Mrs. Ingram send any message?"

"Not that I remember."

"What did you do all the time?"

"Oh, loafed about." Millie's manner to her mother and Effie was always a rather uncertain business. But she is not the only person in the world who finds it very

difficult to come home from some keen pleasure and give a bright and faithful account to an expectant family. Perhaps to-morrow she would be in a mood to expand, and would give a better impression of the scene then.

"Go and eat your supper," said Mr. Rutherglen.

"Thank you very much, father," said Millie in a different tone, "but I had tea late, and I'm not hungry."

"You don't tell very much," said Mrs. Rutherglen. "How perverse you are. Some girls would come back and make it bright and amusing for those who have been obliged to stay at home."

"Did she ask me to come next time?" said Effie.

"No. There's nothing much to tell," said Millie impatiently. "It was awfully dull at first, and then it got a little better. I had no idea it was so late or I would have come home earlier."

"You'd better teach them not to out-stay their welcome, Annie," said Mr. Rutherglen.

"Yes, dear, I have already told them that," said Mrs. Rutherglen.

"I'm going early; good-night," said Millie.

When she was alone in her room temporary annoyance faded away. She undressed in a very leisurely and abstracted manner, and when she got into bed did not lie down but sat with her knees hunched up in front of her, thinking very happily. As the night advanced it grew close; it became, in fact, warm in that listless way which generally heralds tremendous thunder-showers. When Millie's night-gown slipped down from her shoulders she did not move. It was pleasant to feel her hair in a soft warm plait lying down the middle of her back. Sometimes one's brain specialises in slight sensations. When she turned to the table by her bed to see what time it was, the plait was dragged by the movement of her head, heavy but very soft, across her back.

She fell asleep, and woke in the night. Torrents of

rain were falling outside, with a clash of different sounds. The rain made one sound on the roof, and another on the garden, and another on the paved place in front of the house, and on the trees, and on the deep little streams at the roadside. And it was swelling those streams quickly, so that their voices rose on a kind of argumentative crescendo. And it made a different sound on the window-panes. When Millie woke she thought for a few moments that she was back in the southern town that she had lately come from, and that the sounds she heard were the familiar night sounds of chance voices resounding in the street, and quick steps ringing on the pavement, and the passing of stray belated carts; but it seemed as if some flaw in her ears must be making her hear all these sounds a little wrongly. Then she remembered.

CHAPTER VI

I

It was absolutely necessary, in order to preserve any kind of peace, that Mr. Rutherglen should be deceived in some of the minor matters which go to make a household, and in regard to which he exercised his cold tyranny. The two girls would have undertaken to demonstrate to anyone perfectly convincingly how necessary that was.

But in common with their mother they did not stop short where justification ended. They disobeyed and deceived him rather grievously, not merely evading inexcusable tyranny, but excusing themselves too liberally from all moral responsibilities. They started with the idea that certain things had to be concealed and disguised, or life with Mr. Rutherglen would be impossible. And so by a certain cryptic train of thought they could actually come to justify themselves in various other branches of wrongdoing. Being committed inevitably to a certain amount of wrong, the girls both vaguely thought of themselves as being dispensed from being scrupulous—a sad position, they would be prepared to admit, but one not without its advantages. The blame, of course, was all their father's.

Their father expected the girls to have saved sufficient money out of their earnings to last them in pocket-money for some time to come. As they had both been guilty of extravagance, however, they were now faced with a very moneyless future unless Mr. Rutherglen's resolution to give them nothing could in some way be

circumvented. Effie, not generally the more successful strategist of the two, had in this emergency a simple and effective plan. She told her father that certain expenses involved by her fever, which had in fact been rather munificently paid by her school, had swallowed up her own savings. This ruse was successful, and she began immediately to receive a minute allowance from her father. She was an exceedingly omnivorous reader, and the buying and hiring of books was her main expense.

But Millie, whose needs were more diverse, and included new clothes and a better tennis-racket and books and music, was obliged either to do without those things or to get them on credit in Redrith. She generally adopted the latter course. In both the girls there was the vague feeling that these things would be very wrong but for Mr. Rutherglen being what he was. In an evil way they could almost delight to pile on the wickedness which he was responsible for.

Though they both deceived themselves, Millie deceived herself the more thoroughly of the two. Effie did at least have a feeling that all this would be changed in the future. She looked ahead to a time when she would scorn lying and deception and be entirely innocent of those things. Just after a lie that time would loom very near; she would think: "Very soon I must go right away from father; it really isn't worth while as it is." At all times that coming change was an underlying resolution; but as she was not seriously shocked at this for the present, and as the future is such a disappearing phantom, the prospects of a change were not really very bright.

But now Millie, in looking ahead, conscious of all her great restricted ambitions, and subject to moods of wild anger against perverse conditions and surroundings, looked rather to a time when the deceit which had been imposed on her should be more successful and lies really

efficacious. In both the girls there was only a dim consciousness that their reasoning was expedient rather than edifying.

Their exaggerated reserve precluded any tempering of each other's opinions; there was no exchange of ideas to modify or refine. Their rare conversation, though it was not explicitly unfriendly, was almost entirely used as a means of scoring little triumphs and inflicting slight discomforts.

One grey wild morning when they sat waiting, with some pleasure and excitement, for Clive Maxwell and Harry Adams, with whom they were going to walk, they plunged into one of their futile conversations. Effie, who was extraordinarily industrious and passionately interested in her books, was filling the time of waiting by making an index to a book which she thought was in need of it. She had a great standing grievance against the family that not one of them ever felt it necessary to respect her occupations. She was interrupted always by the most trivial remarks, her mother being the worst offender. Now, however, when Millie spoke Effie was not displeased, because her slight excitement already made concentration difficult.

"I suppose Mr. Adams is a great walker," said Millie. "What energy these country-people have—so different from town."

"I hope they won't want to go too many miles," said Effie.

Millie stretched her strong young arms. "They'll think it so funny of you, not being able to swim, and not able to bear the cold, and coddling yourself up as you do. Country people aren't used to that kind of thing."

"I *can* swim," said Effie.

"Yes, but I mean nothing to speak of."

"And I'm not going to coddle myself up. Perhaps

you'll be surprised. I mean to lead quite a wild kind of life."

"Tell me when," said Millie, "in case I shouldn't notice."

"Oh well, some day quite soon. I mean not to mind a bit whether I am cold or hot, or what I eat or where I lie. I shall often go tramping about the country and take whatever comes in the way of weather, and be as glad of one kind as of another."

"What talk!"

"It will come quite easily to me," said Effie. "Well, you will have to believe me when you see me. Or you can go on not believing if you like." Her defiance had something a little frightened about it; she was always nervous under Millie's scorn.

"I'm sure I shall be the first to congratulate you," said Millie. "But what are you waiting for? Suppose, for instance, you do without your hot-water bottle to-night for a start."

"Don't be absurd," said Effie crossly. "On a cold day like this!" She turned back impatiently to her book, while Millie just exerted herself to give a little mocking laugh. Soon after that they heard the front-door bell ring, and the two men came in.

Though Effie and Millie were very seldom in spoken agreement, they had perfect unanimity of feeling in regard to some matters. They both now felt how satisfactory it would be if they could set out on their walk before either their father or mother put in an appearance to keep them and—yes, it must be said—to shame them. Their eyes just met on that—coldly, briefly, with perfect understanding. It was only a little matter, and their parents were already known to both the men, and yet these little things seem important at the time; with a common impulse Millie and Effie hurried the departure.

Mr. Rutherglen came into the sitting-room just as

they were ready to leave it. He shook hands; he liked company. He said: "Sit down; the weather isn't very grand. I shouldn't be surprised if this change in the wind means rain; you'd better wait a bit and see. Take a seat. I was reminded this morning of an amusing thing. You may possibly know. What two towns in France are a sailor's pair of trousers like?"

Effie's nervous dread of her father was apt to take on a show of light-heartedness, especially before strangers. She threw herself into the matter of the riddle with great gaiety. She put herself on his side, as it were, against the guessers, and identified herself with her father's interest in it. But she overdid it. She watched their faces absurdly eagerly for signs of enlightenment. Mr. Adams guessed Marseilles (it was one of those inscrutable guesses which people flash out like lightning, on the very moment of inspiration, in case anyone else shall say it first). Effie was quite delighted, because her father loved a wrong guess. She clapped her hands, and cried out: "No, no!" before Mr. Rutherglen himself had time to do so. He gave her a look under which she reddened and was silenced.

That look said with a kind of cold anger: "Hang it all, is this your riddle or mine?"

II

"Oh, my dear, I have missed my writing-day, which is very unfortunate. How much you will have been wondering what the reason is. Oliver, I was taken ill—not really bad, but my head ached so that I could not write. I am quite all right now, and it shall not happen again. I mean, however bad my head may be I will manage to send something.

"It is very nice of Mary to want to send me a little

present. Am I really to tell her what I want? It is difficult. Say I want nothing unless it were a few sweets. I think that is a delicate way of putting it—because the 'nothing' hints at all kinds of virtuous abstentions on my part, and yet I name my desire.

"No, of course your letters aren't dull; don't suppose that for one moment. I don't see how I could love you and find your letters dull. I suppose love isn't only just a word.

"Do go round to the boot-shop, dear, and just say: 'Miss Rutherglen has left the school but will send you a cheque on the fifteenth of August.' I keep having things forwarded. Do that, like a dear. I am sure to have money then.

"I am longing to hear how that difficult dive progresses. But I find it very difficult to follow your description. You really express yourself very little in your letters, Oliver. If I heard you speak of it I should understand better than when you write.

"I told you about that diver being here. I saw him dive yesterday by chance; I happened to be walking along the opposite shore of the lake. For one moment my heart seemed to stop as I saw the figure flying through the air: I thought it was you. However, of course I soon realised what an indifferent performance it was compared to yours.

"Some friends come bursting in or this would have been much more of a letter. It goes to you with my love. Very soon it will be in your hands when you come running down to breakfast at—well, when you come running down to breakfast. Better not be too specific, I suppose."

III

Mr. Adams never blamed Effie for her tired swimming or reluctant climbing or ill-concealed fatigue. He

thought her very prudent and right; her habits were his own; he was himself very careful of his person, and to guard against tiredness and damp and to ward off colds were not the least important duties of every day. In the expeditions which they took with great zest at this time it happened that Effie and he were nearly always companions. With such a bond as their mutual inferior sportsmanship it could hardly be otherwise. Millie and Clive had the bond of their mutual daring.

It was not without a good deal of dissatisfaction that Effie submitted to this inevitable pairing-off. When she discovered that just as jealously as her eye watched the other couple, so did Harry's, and that just as unwillingly and enviously as she saw them vanish out of sight on some adventurous enterprise, so did Harry—she felt vaguely comforted, and they plodded along in their mutual misfortune. Clive and Millie always left them gaily. Once Clive said to Effie: "But you must learn to stand on the edge of space and not be afraid." The next day she and Harry tried to follow the other two up the steep mountain-path. It was slippery after rain. Harry said: "It isn't safe, your sister oughtn't to be allowed to do it. She has such a wonderful fearless spirit; she ought to be looked after." "It's no use," said Effie crossly; "I can't go on; I must go down." "You are wise," said Harry. "We must only trust that Providence will protect your sister."

Clive and Harry were on affectionate, friendly terms; Harry was very content to be teased by Clive, so long as he could every now and then make it quite clear that he was a bit of a humorist himself. Standing in the road before they parted on their different ways (Millie a little impatient to be off—admirably concealed impatience, hers!), Clive would perhaps issue to Effie a solemn warning on the risk she ran in faring out with Harry.

"Don't mistake his rashness for daring; those two things are distinct," said Clive. "Dare-devilry isn't really courage. Mere dash he may have. But give me the man who is brave with his mind." This little speech, and others like it, were generally the pleasantest thing Effie had to think about as she plodded along beside Harry round the bottom of the mountain—wondering, sometimes, why either of them was there at all.

And away went Clive and Millie—Clive with a bird's feather stuck in his hair, picking mountain-flowers, saying poetry, singing. He had a regular repertoire of attractive qualities, which were discovered simply and disingenuously in turn, like a concert-performer going through a programme, occasionally striking out a new line and reviving former successes. He so plainly wanted your praise. In one way after another, with an obvious purpose, he showed himself to be newly lovable—his passionate feeling for poetry, his singing, his love of birds, his lithe activity, his quick appreciation of humour—all these things for Millie's benefit. He was never satisfied to make only a little effect.

All beauty Clive ever saw he set about making personal to himself. He had so much of it already in his own power and grasp, and it was a kind of pain to him to behold anything beautiful and to be dissociated. Nature and books and pictures he assimilated so thoroughly that he was never baffled by a sense of their alienation from himself; they were all transformed into Clive. And people could rarely withstand his beautiful attack. If some person had a different engrossing tie which made her invulnerable and held her aloof Clive would shun her with a feeling of great disquiet.

Of course, the perpetual quest for new and more beauty meant that he left behind him in his path a great deal that had served his purpose and was forsaken. People had to learn him with some pain. He

extracted what was important from their minds and what was loving from their hearts, but, if he left them then, it was also a fact that they might at any moment make what call they would upon his tenderness and find him deeply, surprisingly faithful.

Sometimes these four went into town together. It was on that kind of occasion that Harry was likely to have little periods of facetiousness—as a man may unbend and prove himself of many parts. His jokes depended, if one may say so, on all the precedent of humour which attaches to jokes in the abstract, rather than to any special claims of their own. He did not concern himself at all anxiously with the quality of the joke, he relied on the fact that every one knows what huge fun jokes are.

One day when they had journeyed into Redrith, and after tea sat lazily and happily with the consciousness of long exercise performed and new strength and inclination for what remained, Clive, after searching through his pockets, said:

"I'm sorry to say this expedition becomes a fiasco; I've left my pipe at home. Well, times are changed; the last time we sat at this table I had my pipe; and you, Effie, were not denied the only cakes in the world you wanted."

"I wasn't here last time," said Harry. "Perhaps I've brought the bad luck. I'd better go.

"If you are going to be at the window, Clive," he continued, "you might stop the next 'bus to take me to the station."

He worked on the thing a bit more, with a mock pathetic look. "I would have liked one more cup of tea, but no—I'd better go at once."

His fun was as bad as that. But then, if you remember, fun is the most splendid thing; you can't possibly hold a contrary opinion.

IV

"My darling,—I do just remember the boy you speak of, and am glad you have got him back. He will know the work, and save you the labour of teaching him from the beginning. Please tell him about sweeping the office-floor with tea-leaves; you know how much I disapprove of a dry method.

"What a misfortune that things should be so slack again! I did not gather from your letter whether that wretched little turnover was after or before you had paid expenses; it is strange you do not make yourself more clear. But really I won't write about money now. Of course, I realize its importance, but I feel a particular hatred for it as a theme. Some people seem free from every thought of it or any other merely practical matter. How I envy their condition!

"Thank you very much, but I really hardly like you to pay the bill yourself. I am afraid it is rather enormous. I am sure I ought to be able to manage it myself soon. You are very, very kind.

"Oh, I feel strange. Hold me close to you to-night —closer, closer than anything you ever dreamed of."

CHAPTER VII

I

"ANIMALS have feelings just the same as we have, haven't they, Mr. Maxwell," said Mrs. Rutherglen. Her more profound moods addressed themselves instinctively to Clive.

They were perched high up on a char-a-banc which some dejected horses were dragging through the town of Brestwater. Millie and Effie and Mr. Adams made up the party of five. It was with the long series of Mrs. Rutherglen's sayings that the day was, so to speak, punctuated. Her little remarks, with all their unimportance, yet altered the sense of the day.

Mr. Rutherglen's absence from home at the whippet races had been the occasion for the expedition. Every now and then Mr. Rutherglen buttoned up himself and one of his dogs in nice sportsmanlike coats, and off they went to the races—the results of which, by the way, he never communicated to his family. These journeys, though they might not take him out of the county, were slow cross-country travelling, and Mr. Rutherglen was often away all day, and sometimes all night. Occasionally Harry Adams accompanied him, to win or lose a little money, but this time he had gone alone.

His absence always seemed an excuse for plunging into some gaiety, however heavy or automatic or untimely. If he spent the night away Mrs. Rutherglen and the girls always sat up till twelve or one o'clock; they might be sleepy and silent and dull, but it would

have seemed an absurd waste of his absence merely to go to bed. And some difference was likewise made to celebrate his whole-day absences—if it was only such a little thing as that Mrs. Rutherglen put on her afternoon dress a few hours earlier in the day than usual, or put an extra comb in her hair, or that Millie ordered the lunch to be laid in the sitting-room. However, sometimes they did better than that.

They were now in the town that had risen round a famous lake, twenty miles from their home. There was a gusty wind and occasional drizzle of rain, and everything looked bleak, as even a thoroughly furnished town can look bleak. The advantage of getting on to the char-a-banc was that a separation between Mrs. Rutherglen and the shops was thus effected. She had been loitering before them to an inconceivable extent, and the little remarks had flowed persistently in a flat, interested voice.

"Now there's a hat that would suit some people!"

"Don't be so *silly*, dear; as if it is any use hurrying and missing everything."

"Look, girls, what a good linen that is; you might almost take it for material."

"What a nuisance people are with their umbrellas!"

"I really can't tear myself away from that hat. It's a sweet thing, and if only I was in mourning I'd buy it."

All this was strangely deadening in its effect on the rest of the party. Clive was the very first to get a little gloomy, since it always told on his spirits to find himself in circumstances entirely unfavourable to his ardour and idiosyncrasies. At first he tried to rescue his position.

"I love shops," he said with enthusiasm; "they are so determined to please. The only thing that offends me is the distressing mode affected by the lady who stands in the windows of dyers and cleaners. I don't

consider she has good taste. She might move a little with the times."

They were passing by one, and stood for a moment.

"But she has a deplorable figure to start with," said Millie—"a great handicap."

"That is her misfortune," said Clive; "the dresses are her fault. Now, Millie, don't excuse her. And there she stands! Hitch up your skirt behind, madam, and pull it down in front!"

Millie smiled at Clive, but Effie gave her sudden praising laugh. Clive turned on her a long, pleased look. He remembered how often he made her laugh; well, she should laugh again and again.

But shop-inspection failed to afford the scope, and Clive became ill at ease. Then they climbed on to the char-a-banc. They had to wait for it for some time, but Mrs. Rutherglen exclaimed, as she sank heavily into her seat, at their good fortune. They had seats for the entertainment at the Metropolitan music-hall.

Coming towards home by an evening train, they discussed what they had seen. Clive, with wonderful restored animation, was trying to save the day. He could be tender and bright and indescribably attractive now, with Mrs. Rutherglen dozing in one corner of the carriage, and the rest of them grouped at the other end, rather hushed, but gay and responsive to every word and look of his.

An important feature of the Metropolitan entertainment had been a row of legs in black stockings seen underneath a slightly-lifted curtain, the whole thing being full of the promise of something attractive withheld. When the curtain was lifted altogether, an expectant audience discovered them to be only dummies, cut short at the knee. Harry Adams said in the train: "I don't mind confessing I was entirely deceived." Considering that the whole house had been deceived,

this was one of those nice easy confessions which show one frank and honest without any loss of prestige. "I don't know that I am easily taken in as a rule," he said, "but on this occasion I readily admit they had me."

Clive said: "The whole of that entertainment was as dead as mutton. I've never said anything was as dead as mutton before: I've waited till now, and I'm glad. As for the legs—oh Harry, that was a barren performance; I've never seen the mental overture so scamped. There wasn't even any pretence of getting at one through one's mind."

"None whatever," said Millie, and though she spoke in her perfectly repressed way she could express so much in the way of agreement. Effie watched her for a moment with a kind of covert gaze; it felt like being a thief, so exclusively for Clive was Millie's gentle expression.

Effie, sitting opposite to them, with her hands folded, and feeling extraordinarily compact and solitary, shut her eyes in some kind of pain, so as not to see them. We shut our eyes and find we only enter into our own dark interior pain. She heard their voices, the voices of the three of them, without listening to what they said. She thought once that Harry's constant interpolations must be a nuisance to Clive, and she wished angrily that he was far away, where he could not trouble Clive.

Then she opened her eyes, not aiming them, or consciously changing their direction, but merely opening them and Clive's eyes were the thing she saw. It felt strange, as if her eyes had been directed to his all the time, even in spite of closed lids.

Clive, with very ready detachment from a barely-concluded pronouncement of Harry's, was quickly conscious of just what was charming in Effie's stiff solitary figure and gloomy young eyes fixed upon him. It was

most characteristic of him, most beautiful in him, most dangerous for him—this infallible, swift, subtle perception of charm. And in that moment when he perceived it he yearned for it, not vulgarly, more with his soul than with his body. He was very like a kind of enchanted child, who must taste food, and smell flowers, and touch colours in the moment when he sees those things, or else they are only a pain to him. So Clive looked at Effie with great tenderness. "I never saw anything so erect and yet so sleepy," he said. He rolled up a coat and put it in the best place at her back.

"I'm not sleepy," said Effie.

"That is what children say," said Clive with disbelieving tenderness.

II

That night, after a belated evening meal, Clive and Millie walked down the garden path. Clive put his arm in Millie's and they both felt extremely happy.

Millie said: "Can we swim to-morrow, Clive?"

"Yes, yes," said Clive intensely; "and the next day, and every day something."

Millie, with all that was noble in her nature stimulated, said: "We will do good and happy things all our lives." She then felt very shy because she had said "good." She looked up at Clive in a kind of ecstasy of devotion and resolve.

He was looking away, his eyes fixed suddenly, keenly on the wall at the end of the garden, where two cats were crouching and creeping on each other. Millie already knew what it was to feel the pang of jealousy for his ready interests and distractions; now, after a minute of jealous pain, during which she wondered how she could be less than a cat-fight, she threw herself into his interest, and they stood very still and watched, though

every few moments Millie glanced at his profile, his clear eye, his pale cheek, and watched his unconsciousness of her.

The cats stood crouching on the wall, facing each other. There was condensed rage in their outlines, and they were so close that the tips of their noses almost touched—which perhaps after all gives precedent for a similar method of expressing emotion on the stage. They had begun to make cruel wails and growls, and suddenly they sprang together in a dreadful embrace. They swayed and rolled about on the top of the wall; they were locked by their teeth and their claws, and fell as one cat to the ground. For a moment Clive did not know which side of the wall they had fallen, and he went nearer, Millie following. They found the cats swaying in battle, knit together limb for limb, and their wild, melancholy, angry cries were smothered or open-mouthed, according to the contingencies of battle. When they separated they stood, two untidy cats, looking at each other, until the less valiant spirit took a few steps to one side, the beginning of a veiled retreat. As soon as there was a considerable space between them he turned and ran. Against the last light low in the sky, he was seen galloping away, his tail looking very long behind him —an unfortunate little cat, certainly punctured in many places, and with stiffness coming on tomorrow.

"Did you see the menace he managed to put into that retreating amble?" said Clive. "A little cat with a sense of drama."

And then he was content to go on his way home. It seemed incredible that such unimportant little things should catch at his attention and steal it away when she had been there beside him with her bright yielding intimacy. His easy detachment made her feel something extraordinarily aloof in him, which only time and

patience could recapture. And now he was going, so that there was no time. It was not rare for her to have even her happiest days darkened by a kind of bewildered anger at his separateness, and she often left him with her heart aching violently.

III

Sometimes when she was strolling in the grounds of Skellow Grange with Mrs. Ingram and Clive, Millie saw her father in the distance, moving about with his slow ponderous walk, perhaps with as many as twenty dogs at his heels, all delicately adjusting their pace to his, and giving little quick anxious looks into his face. It always maddened her to see how people and animals and even circumstances adapted themselves to his cool selfish determinations. The mere sight of him in the distance produced in Millie a coldness and resentment so bitter as to be an actual pain.

The consciousness that her father might be round any corner was all that was uneasy in some wonderful hours. Millie had an instinctive passion for rich and easy surroundings. These particular surroundings were rich just in the way she would herself have arranged. That is to say, she stepped from a garden filled with her favourite flowers into a house which catered for her taste in a most unexpected way. Her tiles, her rugs, her patterns, her books, her blue-and-white; it was all an amazing gratification and confirmation of her own perfect taste.

"Clive is a wonderful buyer," said Mrs. Ingram, with her keen, living look at him; she told stories of his bargains, his sudden telegrams from strange places for money, his hair-breadth victories in the race with dealers; and Clive supplemented these stories with his air of boyish happy boastfulness, and sunned himself in this atmosphere of intense praise and approval.

In these surroundings Millie's close adventurous intimacy with Clive proceeded. She was very quiet exteriorly; her sense of dignity would never allow her to say to him even as much as he said to her. For in relation to everything they loved his was the more ecstatic word, and she knew the necessity for making allowance for his higher key. Otherwise she met him with full response—her hand to his if he asked for it, her company for long hours if he wished for it, and always her beauty for his gaze.

Millie was not communicative about her absences from home. When she came in from some lengthy absence, and her mother and Effie asked her rather jealously where she had been, she replied: "Out."

But one day Millie had the dissatisfaction of being accompanied by Effie on her expedition to the Grange. It was Effie's first visit; she had wanted to come for some time, but had not been encouraged by her mother or Millie. Millie's gentleness in love did not extend itself to her family; they even suffered for it, on the contrary, by means of her dull gloomy reaction when she was parted from Clive. She had never been accustomed to speak to them if she was disinclined, but now often she sat for the whole evening in her absorption without uttering a single word. And she was not pleased that Effie should come with her to the Grange.

There was something extraordinarily annoying in hearing Effie pounce down on all the good things in the house, with an exact repetition of Millie's own special choice and taste and praise. It was a ludicrous and disconcerting fact that in spite of their being far from friendly, in spite of their bickering, their disagreements, their mild contempt, they were perpetually evincing perfect unanimity of thought and instinct and taste. They would have preferred to disagree, and yet were

always finding themselves in deep important agreement.

On this particular occasion Millie took to herself rather ignoble comfort in her uneasiness and jealousy, because Effie in her first visit to the Grange succeeded in showing herself quite conspicuously foolish.

Mrs. Ingram went round the kennels from time to time, sometimes accompanied by Millie and Clive. Then came the day when Effie was there too.

In the kennel-yard the little party met Mr. Rutherglen. It was past the time when he usually returned home, or perhaps the girls, with their almost incredibly keen dislike of seeing him, would have stayed behind.

Clive talked to them as they walked, about the art of Augustus John. Effie's whole bearing expressed her exaggerated attention; she turned her face all the time to watch him as they walked. Clive, perfectly conscious and perceptive, knew how unlike this was to Millie—Millie with her rare glances.

As soon as Effie saw her father in the yard she waved to him with a nervous gesture of pleasure. What possessed her she could hardly herself have said. But in the presence of strangers she always had some deep shame of her fear, and made an elaborate pretence of normal relations. Also, she had an absurd persistent wish to conciliate him; she would persevere in the face of unvarying failure. As they approached across the yard she hastened her steps towards him and began to talk quickly and gaily to Mrs. Ingram. She said: "I do *love* coming to see the dogs. How their barking excites me—only nicely! Why does father keep that dog alone? Oh, he will tell us. Why, father, do you keep that dog alone? Oh, I am sorry, did I interrupt? Why do you keep that dog alone, father?" she asked, and again with extraordinary persistence in the face of his entirely ignoring her.

Mr. Rutherglen planted himself by Mrs. Ingram, and without looking at her began to involve her in one of his deliberate conversations.

"I see they haven't put up those shutters yet. They seem to think we can wait their time. I'll send the order up to Hargood's to-day, and then they'll know differently."

In the first pause Effie said, with her strange impelling excitement: "Why must you keep that dog alone? Look, that one over there." She even put her hand upon his arm, and pointed with her other hand. Again, what possessed her?

Mr. Rutherglen turned his head very slowly and looked at her, and then down at the hand that touched him. She had an actual physical sensation in her hand, as of some hard iron pressure. She lifted it away and was struck dumb. She knew she had only herself to blame. And Clive watched her steadily. And Mrs. Ingram turned away uneasily from her expression.

IV

And one night Millie stayed to dinner at Skellow Grange, and Harry Adams, who was a fellow-guest was going to see her home, her way being his.

They had all been walking up and down the flagged courtyard, where tubs of yellow nasturtiums looked like the ghosts of their bright day-time selves. This was a night in August, and there was only a rare stray shiver of cold in the air. As it grew late, Clive and Millie found themselves left alone to brave these airs, the others having gone indoors. It was time to end these last moments together.

"My nightingale isn't singing in the copse to-night," said Clive.

"We will go nearer," said Millie.

They strolled down the garden and to the verge of

the little thicket's blackness. Clive paused there, and the bird began to sing as if it had been waiting for them. The enchantment filled Clive's heart; in separate complete joy he attended, and took these sounds into his being as definitely as if he could add to himself new flesh and new blood.

Then he saw Millie, barely a yard away, her face pale under the moon, her arms hanging at her sides, and her eyes, suddenly expressing too much love, fixed on his. The quick vision of her thus was uneasy. And when he saw her eyes fill slowly with tears while she still gazed at him mutely, a curious expression of almost resentful aloofness came on his face.

Millie was quick to know him in that moment. She realized perfectly what she had already dreadfully suspected—that in showing any sadness, before him one was only just putting up a barrier between oneself and him. How strange that seemed, how extraordinary. How utterly unlike love!

And Millie was right. Clive did feel himself harden; he felt himself revolt from sadness which corresponded to nothing he could feel, sadness which made some claim on him which he could not fulfil.

There was indeed only one form of disturbance of mind known to Clive. That took place during the interval which occurred between his quick perception of some new beauty, and his feeling that he had made that beauty his own. That was generally a brief interval, but while it lasted Clive had some uneasiness and bewilderment and wistfulness in his mind—as if he doubted for the time if God really loved him after all.

But Millie was secured long ago.

CHAPTER VIII

I

"My DARLING,—I was very surprised to get your letter; we were so absolutely agreed that secrecy was the best thing for us. What should we possibly gain by my speaking? As a matter of fact, I *could* only tell my mother, because my father isn't very strong, and we always keep from him anything that might trouble him. You used to talk to me endlessly about the necessity for complete secrecy, and now you want me to go to my mother and make a useless partial statement that I am engaged. I do wish that you wouldn't take sudden fancies quite contrary to all that you have said before. You say you are not happy; well, I am sorry, I can't see what is to be done. But really, my darling, I pity you from my heart if you are not happy.

"Oh, Oliver, thank you for the book of poetry. Yes, you are quite right about my loving poetry—very much. Of course that does not mean *all* poetry. This has only just arrived and I have barely glanced at it. I dare say I shall like it very much, though those I happened to hit on were not perhaps the best. It may be that the name she has chosen for her book made me a little prejudiced. That's silly of me. Also the fact that I have never heard of her. As if there were not always good new people coming along! Well, you know how much I love getting a present, and I loved getting this.

"Yes, I'm afraid some of my letters have been short;

I am so often interrupted, which is a great nuisance. But this is rather a monster, isn't it?

"Would you like to hear a little more about mamma's cousin, Mrs. Ingram? She has been very unhappy, someone who knows her well told me. And I believe she actually hates people who suffer. Doesn't it seem a kind of madness for her to *hate* them! But I know I once knew a girl who was very ugly, with big projecting teeth and a slight deformity in her back; and she told me that when she saw any other girl with her same kind of ugliness she actually loathed her. I don't think I should ever be tempted to hate people who shared my misfortunes. I think I hate them when they don't.

"I believe this Mrs. Ingram likes people entirely according to whether she fancies they would be great or little sufferers in tribulation—so her friend more or less suggested to me. Of course she isn't necessarily right in her estimate of their capacity, but that is what she judges by.

"We have a great deal of rain, but I begin to tolerate these scenes; I begin to love them.

"I thought suddenly this morning that you are very true to me. You are very good. The thought brought tears to my eyes.

"Now do be happy, Oliver, or else I can't be."

II

Millie had a manner of extreme composure in any emotion. Impatience with her family, or fear of her father, or love of Clive, all put a kind of seal or stillness on her. Her lips became almost scornful in their languor, her eyelids drooped a little until they left no expression in her eyes. Her tone in speaking to her family could be so low and cold and detached that she seemed like one enemy and her voice another. And in

entirely other and happy emotions her voice to Clive grew distant and expressionless, in a way that he, noticing, found extraordinarily attractive. It made her almost as desirable as the unattained, and yet with none of the pain.

She knew he rejoiced in her; he did so openly. His voice, unlike hers, grew warm; his eyes quite obviously attended to her beauty. She conducted herself with complete self-possession in front of him; she was very gentle and not demonstrative. Where most people would have laughed she gave a quick understanding smile, which was beautiful but vanished immediately. But when Clive had gone, and she sat with her family, some bitter dissatisfaction worked in her, and without any very obvious change of manner what had been gentle became hard. She was quiet now as she had been quiet before; but she was able to make you know, almost without a sign, whether she was quiet with peace or with resentment. It was a wonderful insistence of her power, that she made you know even while she as it were scorned to tell you.

When they were out together she tried to catch Clive up in his ecstatic love of nature. For art Millie had a true connoisseur's passion of appreciation, but nature always took a curiously secondary place to art derived from it. Under Clive's expanding influence she was often genuinely carried away. When she was most carried away she would probably merely say in reply to him when he pointed out something to her: "How perfectly lovely!" in her calm voice, and with an eye that had already wandered from the scene. He loved her coolness, the kind of little defence she put in front of her emotions. In all the people he met he always sifted out quickly what was individual and attracted him.

But though Millie knew how truly and discriminatingly he loved her, she also knew that she was not single to him.

She was alone in the sitting-room one day when he came striding into the house. Effie, who was in the dining-room on the other side of the passage, heard him say: "I find it very good to see you, Millie. Well, where's Effie? Surely she's not gone off on the loose with Adams again. They'll break their necks or something." Effie called out: "I'm here, in the dining-room." She was smiling as she called, and it was in her voice. She would have liked to come under his notice as a girl who had a precious store of thoughtfulness and knowledge in her brain, but as that somehow did not happen she found it good merely to be laughed at. When Clive heard her voice, which was like a child's in its expressiveness, he came across and looked in.

"I've not gone with him at all," complained Effie. She smiled broadly; she smiled too much when she was nervous. But she looked beautiful as she bent a little over her book, pretending in her embarrassment to be still half-engrossed in it—such a foolish pretence, with that face! The rich development of her body was often hidden under loose dresses and by slightly hunched shoulders, but now a more fitting dress showed the full roundness of her form. Clive had already noticed that she looked big or little according to the different dresses she wore. She knew his peculiar long look was turned on her, and she could not meet it. That look nearly always made a silence where it was directed. It produced an extraordinary embarrassment in Effie. She was exceedingly conscious of her mouth; she had a horrible feeling that she was nothing but mouth, and dreaded having to call attention to it by speaking.

"Why do you sit here alone?" he asked.

"Millie would hum."

"She shouldn't."

"She did yesterday afternoon too."

"I dare say melodies besiege her," said Clive, a little jealous for his friend. It was like him to condemn Millie rather readily and then to be jealous for her.

"It means that I have to sit here in the cold," Effie said with her exaggerated smile.

He looked at her for a long time, seeming to weigh things. Their want of love grated unpleasantly on him.

Clive held out his hand and threw his handsome head back inducingly. "Come along, Effie; let's all sit together." Effie rose without a word. Her eyes and her whole bearing were serious, but the smile, which Clive did not quite understand, was added on.

When they came into the sitting-room Millie greeted them by reading aloud:

> "The hare-bell lifts its fairy trump on high!
> The blithe lark carols in the summer sky!"

Clive leant over to see the book, his fine dark head so splendid and bright and close.

"'A Soul's Soliloquies.' Is this work of genius new, Millie? I should say it wouldn't be an unpleasing task to have to review it."

"I don't know anything about it," said Millie. "But in reviewing it one should avail oneself freely of the privilege to quote." She read again.

> "And I told them: 'Let Love be or God or Devil,
> Or parasitic weed or flaming flower,
> Soul and body I will dare it, sacrament or revel,
> For a purple-hearted, passion-painted hour!'"

"One would certainly let the work speak for itself," said Clive, "merely choosing suitable introductory phrases. 'Instinct with the very stuff of life' one might say. 'The author has sensed those inner mysteries which are hidden from common mortals.'

It would be nice to conclude: 'If there is one word more than another which sums up this author's work, and describes fitly and tersely what she stands for, what contemporary criticism will judge her by and posterity honour her for, it is the word'—now guess."

"No," said Millie; "tell me." She would never say "us" for herself and Effie.

"Well, it is the word 'quality.'"

"Yes," said Millie; "how comprehensive."

Effie laughed. "*Do* let me look," she said urgently to Millie, holding out her hand. Clive went into the dining-room to fetch some matches. Millie went on reading to herself with her scornful amusement. "Do let me have a look,' said Effie again. She wanted to show Clive that she also was capable of discovering funny lines to make him laugh.

Millie murmured after a moment: "When I have finished."

"Thank you," said Effie, indignant; "I hardly need you to tell me that I can have it then."

When Clive came back he said: "Who did us the service of securing this volume, and why?"

"It must have come from the Library by mistake, I imagine," said Millie.

Clive came more and more frequently to the house. Mrs. Rutherglen, who at first had rather overdone ceremoniousness, now overdid informality; there was a good deal of vulgarity in her exaggeration either way. He occasionally saw the family-life very bare, and noticed little things which they themselves perhaps had not noticed in the course of years; how Mrs. Rutherglen always addressed her remarks to Millie of the two girls, and Millie seemed not to hear, and Effie answered; how Millie, if she must answer her mother, first obviously took a breath, and assumed an expression of unwilling patience,—a form of demonstration that always made Mrs. Rutherglen look

vaguely guilty; how Effie sometimes stared for long moments at her father, and if Mr. Rutherglen caught her at it started and looked away, but was soon at it again; or, worse still, how sometimes when she caught his eye she smiled quickly, eagerly, foolishly. And so on.

To a man who was capable of very delicate perceptions both the parents were painfully flagrant, one in her fear and deceit, the other in his gross autocracy. Clive liked to try to look at them only as they were reflected in Millie or Effie.

Clive did not often remain for the evening meal, but one night when he had done so they all sat round the fire. Mr. Rutherglen's chair was placed in a very favourable position; he liked to feel the fire burning hot on his shins. The lamp was just behind his head, illuminating his book. The wind roared fitfully at them from outside, and from time to time the rain made a hissing in the fire. Every now and then Clive thought, with a sense of desire and relief that he would soon be out in that weather working his way home.

Some successful transgression of his rule that afternoon had made Mrs. Rutherglen particularly affable and complacent in her efforts to be always in her husband's favour. She spoke to Millie, but for Mr. Rutherglen's benefit.

"I do want you to learn, Millie, not to be weak and lenient with the tradespeople. If they don't do their duty by you, well, then, take your custom elsewhere. I tell you now, dearie, and then you can remember for the future, when perhaps I shan't be here any longer to tell you."

After a few moments Effie said: "All right, mamma." She spoke quite mechanically, hardly knowing she did so. She was looking through a portfolio for a drawing for Clive, to show how well John could reproduce. She was determining that when she found it and took it to him she would not smile. But she did.

"Another thing, dearie—and this applies to you too, Effie;—if either of my girls should ever marry, I hope they'll obey their husbands in every thought."

"Mamma," said Millicent, "we're trying to compare the two versions of this poem; it's almost impossible." Her tone had a veiled threat, and grated on Clive, who sat by her.

"Yes, Annie, don't you speak," said Mr. Rutherglen, "or not without asking Millie's leave. Do you know why my children value their brains so much, Mr. Maxwell? Because they're so scarce." His head shook with strange little automatic jerks after he had said that; he was pleased.

It struck Clive again and again as he walked home that this family life was an offensive thing. Though Effie's was, perhaps, the least offensive part in it.

CHAPTER IX

I

As Millie watched Clive's flights from her to other things, discovering by degrees his private satisfying passions, his quick complete detachment from herself, she was obliged to become more humble in her hopes of him. She had said with great bitter surprise: "Why, he loves any bird as much as he loves me!" Now she was more likely to say with some pale joy: "He loves me as much as any bird. But there was in this humility and compromise something so alien to her temperament that she felt as if her world had had fallen about her, and she mourned the loss of that world—the proud hopes it had contained, the carefully considered ideal of a man's passionate exclusive devotion, and her own cool stormy consent. She renounced those things because she loved Clive; but it felt strange and very anxious.

One day as they walked Clive talked to her about Effie. In a very innocent way he always drew his old friends into his new enthusiasms. The next time they walked he was beside Effie, and Millie's consequent companionship with Harry Adams made her feel as if she were the victim of a ludicrous conjuring-trick which changed a sovereign into a farthing.

"I haven't known what to do sometimes when I've seen you go up those dangerous places," said Harry.

"I have never felt more safe."

"If you were hurt it would be so dreadful," he said.

Millie gave her rare laugh; its sound was rather like Effie's, high and shrill, but very sweet. "I don't know that it would matter very much to anyone," she said.

"Oh, *wouldn't* it!"

In the meantime Clive and Effie walked along the narrow level road which led to the sharp blue mountains without ever seeming to get to them. The road was badly kept; there was a smooth strip in the middle, and on each side of that a long little ridge of grass, and loose stones beyond. Clive felt a little shy of Effie, perhaps on account of her nervous smile and exceedingly attentive unrestful eyes. They left the narrow smooth strip of road for each other out of a kind of embarrassed politeness, so that it lay neglected just between them.

It was a quiet day in September. They passed by barren-looking fields, in which the thin corn-harvest stood. The shooks had been battered by wind and rain, and fell this way and that, each with a different expression.

"Why haven't we been together before? Isn't it splendid?" said Clive.

"Yes, simply splendid," said Effie. How guarded Millie was compared to this. Clive loved Millie's way. So far, Effie failed to draw upon his finest enthusiasm; he was still in the mood to think Millie's ways were the most alluring in the world.

When they came to the lake-side they sat down on the stony beach. Clive talked. At home Effie could listen to him so keenly when there were other people by, listening too. But when he was talking to her alone she found it very difficult to be conscious intelligently of what he said in her preoccupation with her own hands and mouth. She discovered that her hands felt as if they were in extraordinary positions when he was talking to her, and she would

then hardly take in what he said, trying to make them feel natural again.

She could have cried at her inability to interest him. As she could not impress him with her intelligence she became effusive.

"How glad I am that you brought us just here! But of course you always know what is best." She had an uneasy thought that she was like her mother.

"Do you think that of me?" asked Clive, easily pleased by any praise. His face assumed a gentle, humble look.

"Yes, I do indeed," Effie said, and again felt uneasy.

"Oh, how you please me!" said Clive gently.

Effie made a tremendous effort to be intelligent. "But you don't know what other things in the world I admire, and surely a lot depends on that. I mean, I might admire you, and rococo architecture, and the Munich School of Painting—and *then* where would you be?"

"I suppose a young man ought to be more particular," said Clive, smiling, "but in this case I can't help feeling rather indifferent about the company I keep. I see there is some gladness in your eyes, and that is enough for me."

Effie now felt uncomfortably pledged to rococo.

"But the other things I like *are* lovely things," she said.

"Do you think I don't know your tastes? I have been watching you for some time, Effie."

"I suffer so from self-consciousness before you," Effie said volubly. "And yet in an ordinary way I can be quite detached from myself. *Do* you know," she said with her exaggerated expressiveness, "I can be so unconscious of myself—of my body, I mean —that when I think of some scene at which I have been present, in looking back I don't have a mental

vision of myself as a body, but as a stick or a block of wood or a spark. Isn't that awfully funny? I see the spark as part of the scene that I am recalling, and directly I am aware that it is me I have an impulse to put my thumb on it and put it out."

She stopped to wonder passionately if to talk like this was to be interesting. She dimly suspected that a silly communicative excitement possessed her brain. And always in future when she was with him she had to wonder blindly whether what she said was interesting or not, having lost all power of judging.

"Why put your thumb on that spark?" said Clive.

"I don't know; it is merely a habit of mind, I suppose. I see a large and not too brilliant spark, which is me, and then immediately I must extinguish it."

"Yes, but leave that to God, you child," said Clive.

He leant back, his elbows propping him up behind. He seemed so glorious that she was afraid to look, except by quick stolen glances that terrified her.

The lake was in front of them, very wide. It reflected and slightly exaggerated the little light in the grey sky. They heard a child's voice in the far distance making some repeated call—the same call over and over again. They wondered where she was and why she was not answered and must go on calling. They scanned the long shore on the far side of the lake. At last Clive saw a little running figure of a child in a white pinafore. He showed Effie. They found another figure, a boy walking in front. It was difficult to believe that the call which came very clearly across the water was uttered by that tiny figure, quickly lost even while she still ran on the distant beach, and difficult to find again—like an early star.

There was no need either for shelter or for exercise; it was such a negative evening—no sun, no cold, and no wind. "It's a strange day," thought Clive;

"it feels as if the windows were closed." It was too tame for him. He hardly knew where to direct all the keen interest and appreciation he was accustomed to pour out from himself. His enthusiasms did not wait to be called up by beauty; they arose, and the beauty had to be found. He wondered where Millie was now. He suddenly thought, by contrast, of Effie's great nervousness; it was very acute, he knew. "And she must always smile," he thought; "and it happens to be quite beautiful, with that little pained look just at the back of the smile." The loosing of his appreciation always gave him a noble kind of joy. He turned round suddenly and gazed up at Effie, who immediately felt stiff and helpless.

"Have you many friends? Do you care for friends?"

"Oh no, I don't have any," she said.

"But you must. Oh, Effie, we will be such friends!"

"I would simply *love* to. I think friendship must be such a wonderful thing," said Effie. She then wanted to say: "I am not at all like my mother, really;—I only seem to be."

Clive patted her knee. "Then that's done," he said. He turned his eyes away from her, to her unspeakable relief. "How happy I feel!" he said with deep sincerity.

She put her hand on him and stroked him nervously. He noted her strange inconsistency, that she could do this when she was too shy to look at him.

"Effie," he said, very interested, "I believe you think I'm a wonderful person."

"I do," she said with fervour, but something in her was again dissatisfied in case she was only pleasing his vanity.

"Oh, but I'm not really, you know," he remonstrated doubtfully.

Effie wanted some beautiful thing to say to con-

tradict him. She was excited, she stammered, she had no idea; she heard herself say: "I know better!" in a ghastly facetious voice. She pulled herself up sharply. "Now this will not do," she thought calmly; "he will never want to speak to me again." Even if she could never feel easy and natural before him, it was absolutely necessary that she should cover her uneasiness and act the part of a calm, intelligent girl. For the future, instead of thinking, "I must show him that I am an intelligent girl," she thought: "I will *pretend* to him that I am an intelligent girl"—and it was somehow much easier as it were to act the part than it had been to live it.

As they sat there it grew dark quickly, though the air seemed too still for dark to travel in on. It came while Clive and Effie were talking, and they suddenly found it there. But the coming of darkness did not mean that they now beheld a landscape that was modest and obscure and sombre in comparison with a gayer daylight landscape—though that is what one might expect. No, the daylight scene had been very delicate and reserved and monotonous, uniformly grey. Now a most romantic blackness settled on the groups of trees—a rich gorgeous black; the sky was more vividly dark than it had been light. Though what had occurred was a change from light to dark, it was a change from simplicity to grandeur.

They heard a faint sound on the trees behind them even before they were aware of the rain on themselves. They jumped up and began to walk quickly home. It did not seem natural to Effie to walk so quickly immediately after sitting still for so long; but then nothing was natural. She tried, passionately, not to stumble and to walk easily, just as she passionately tried to talk and laugh easily.

It became heavy rain. "You haven't brought a coat, Effie," said Clive.

"I'm afraid not; I never thought of rain."

"You will admit it does sometimes rain in these parts?"

"Yes, I will admit that—just to humour you," said Effie.

He put his coat on her, and walked in his shirt. So now she knew that there was one thing in the world which she loved just a little more than she loved him—and that was his coat.

This time he guided her into the best part of the road; sometimes he hurried her on with his arm. Whenever his arm was on her she immediately touched him with her hand, quickly and awkwardly responsive. But if they knocked against each other accidentally in the dark, Effie said with great politeness: "I beg your pardon."

He left her at her door; he resumed his wet coat. Effie said, with her voice over-charged with commiseration: "I am dry, but how wet you feel!"

"It will teach me a lesson; I must learn to be more provident," said Clive.

Her ready praising laugh remained in his ears.

II

Millie had what amounted to an absorption in the idea of God. She noted the existence of good and evil in herself not with the religious person's joy and repentance, but with an inquirer's curious observation. She could not avoid being vitally interested in God, but she reduced that emotion to its coldest, hardest form until at last her religious instinct became, by a curious paradox, actually an excuse for unworthiness. For she built up God from her own characteristics, and whatever of good or evil that she discovered in herself was, as it were, a contribution to the science of God, and as such desirable. She made Him entirely

in her own likeness. "So *that's* how you work!" she thought, observing herself. If she observed evil, it was still knowledge of God and His ways; it was almost religion, if religion is a cold interested inquiry.

But her love of Clive made a kind of glory which loosed all these ice-bound emotions, so that she felt on the edge of revelation, and as if anything might overtake her in the way of humility and tenderness. Anything might happen. After happy moments with Clive, and under the influence of the heavenly expansion that came into her heart, she sometimes thought: "And in that life I will love mamma and Effie." Those were radiant glimpses she had.

This being only emotion and having nothing to do with discipline, the circumstance of any change in her own happiness could make her exclaim to herself in the same hour: "I wish Effie had never been born; I hope he will make her suffer too." She had already wished that the Creator had not added to nature the final unnecessary touch of birds; she had also wished that he had conceived of a dry earth, and not invented water which takes a strange passionate hold on a man. In fact she had at different times banished from the earth all those things which in their turn made Clive lose his consciousness of her. She now wished that God had stopped short of Effie. She considered on what a mere chance an individual's creation hangs, and felt goaded and exasperated because the chance was so fortuitous. Effie might so easily never have been, or have been different.

But what she had done with the birds he loved, and the crowds and the books and the songs, she now tried to do with Effie. She had, as it were, conceded to those birds a rather stark cold nest, and now she grudgingly allowed Effie a strictly limited function in the scheme of life. "He must have all his outside interests," she thought; "it is his nature; as long

as I am first, that must be enough." But her ideal was to be greatly and exclusively loved, and she had to recognise that this was not her ideal. However, Clive compelled her allegiance more than any ideal could.

And whatever she might suffer or lose, she knew that it always remained to her to be at any time the old Millie again—a girl who knew religion and love and emotion, but made them cold manageable things. She always had a retreat secure to her; she could retreat into her old self.

Her manner to Clive having been made so much of reserve, it did not have to change much with any change in their circumstances. Clive still sought her out almost as much as before. He had added on Effie to his life, but he made a most charming and genuine display of not being willing to lose Millie. His chief excitement was for Effie now, but he most sincerely loved Millie. "I do care for you most awfully!" he said to her once at this time, looking at her a little wistfully, and speaking with the intense longing and conviction that he could put into his voice. He was afraid of not having her; he wanted all things for himself. The very fact that she had ceased to be first with him gave, strangely enough, a kind of jealous impetus to his affection.

So he still claimed her for walking and talking and reading; and the hours he spent with Effie were not taken from her,—they were extra hours. But it was impossible for Millie not to observe that while for Effie he had a fresh enthusiasm, for herself he had a kind of tactical plan; she resented it with all her mind, while her heart still clung to him.

One evening in September he came and found the two girls alone. He sat down by Millie; Effie pretended to go on reading in her corner, exaggerating the studiousness of her pose and expression. Millie

continued to sew with her beautiful calm, which she did not exaggerate. To every little remark of Clive's she gave her perfect implied understanding, hardly expressed, conveyed in her very silences, or in one of her meaning suppressed looks.

"I shall go and dive to-night," said Clive. "Have you ever dropped into the path the moon makes on the water, Millie? You know, just as you reach it you have a sudden panic that it is hard—it looks metallic.

"There is no moon to-night, but still I must dive," Clive went on. "One dives into blackness and is not quite sure when the water will come. I want you to dive at night, Millie; I want you to know that experience."

("I would come now if you wanted me," thought Millie; "but you don't.")

"Mrs. Ingram missed you to-day," Clive said. "What have you been doing all day?" Millie saw him glance at Effie's bent head; he wanted to know about her too, perhaps only about her. "I stayed up there all day because things were rather upset. Mrs. Clay (she is the housekeeper) was taken ill," said Clive. Though he had been talking to her, Millie had suspected him of thinking most of Effie, and now in his little parenthesis he had given himself away. Millie knew the housekeeper very well, and Effie did not; Clive's information had obviously been for her benefit. Millie shrunk sensitively from what was wounding to her pride; she got up and left the room.

III

Clive and Effie walked quickly along a path in the dark. Clive carried a lantern which he had not yet lit. Effie occasionally trotted to keep up with him. Her quick little steps seemed somehow to confide tenderly in him. He felt her worship surrounding him. He knew

about her heart; he even knew that he seemed to her too big to be taken in as a whole; her absorption had to be in some little part of him only. He felt her marvelling at him—but in one thing at a time, his voice, or his walk, or what he said, or how he looked. She was quite taken up with her worship of one thing, and for the others had a vague abstraction. He could read her so well by now. She often gave the impression of being a little astray; he knew that she was astray for him as a whole because all her little power and imagination were concentrated on some part of him.

It must always stir him profoundly to discover himself loved, even though such a discovery generally brought an abatement of his own ardour. And there was something passionate and overwhelmed about Effie that filled him with joy. He took a tremendous pride in her love; she was very transparent to him.

The path they mounted was sunk in a furrow of the hill, which rose steeply on each side of it. When at last they came out on an open rocky promontory there was a slight sound of wind and water to tell them that the blackness around was space now instead of hill. They stood still, and Clive lit the lantern. The circle of light took in their two figures, but only up to the waist; their faces were in the great darkness, which had now become more dark.

"But you *can't* dive," said Effie uneasily.

"Come along, Effie, we will go down."

They had come out on the promontory called the Devil's Leap, at a great height above the lake. They now climbed down by easy regular steps in the light of the lantern, until Clive stopped and examined the shape of the rocky platform.

"Twenty feet. Stand here, Effie, and don't move," he said.

"I won't move; it's so dark." She shivered slightly

with vague apprehension. Clive disappeared, and she stood there quietly, only just evading some terrible fear.

She stood on rock at her feet; and leant against rock at her back; and her arms, outstretched, lay along rock—all invisible but all emphatically hard. It seemed as if the world when it became dark became hard! If only she could have felt one soft thing! . . . That would have broken the illusion.

"Effie, you're not nervous, are you?" said Clive coming back. He felt very happy; he had brought her here on purpose to increase her awe and breathlessness, precious things. How fearlessly he could dive, he would show her.

"You are not going in *now?*" asked Effie.

"Why not?"

She began to tremble, hardly knowing why.

"Well, I suppose you can wait just a moment. I mean, there can be no hurry."

He laughed inwardly. "I say, isn't it dark!"

He was like a child in his anxiety for praise. Effie knew that in him, but she was not merely humouring him now.

"I can't see the water, can you, Effie?"

"No," she said crossly.

"I suppose one must just believe it is there," said Clive, doubtfully.

But Effie took him up with a kind of impatient passion which he had hardly expected. She came nearer, within reach. He thought she would stand on his bare feet but he did not move.

"It may be all as hard as iron," she said angrily.

"Well, Effie, a kind of iron that will make a loud splash when I reach it."

"You think so; oh yes, that's what you *think*," she jeered. He gave one quick laugh at her tone. In her excitement she thought: "Very well, when you

find that I have saved your life you will remember that laugh and be sorry."

"Will you wait for a minute until I come back?" she pleaded.

"I will. But don't you move without the lantern."

Effie climbed down the steps, breathing hard. She was obsessed by that belief that dark things were hard, and water was yielding and soft only by day. She came to the lowest rocky platform and saw the water lapping thinly against her boots, and it was like waking up from a dream. Even now, she rolled up her sleeve and sunk her arm deeply in, and right down it was soft. She laughed a little, half-ashamed.

"All right," she said casually, coming back.

"Poor Effie, it makes you feel wild if you think there is danger for me, doesn't it?" he said with his insatiable appetite for her praise. Her response rushed at him as usual.

"Quite wild," she said quickly. He heard some movement of her body, and could have said beforehand that he would hear it. Because he knew by now that with her words of love and praise were born gestures of love—thought, word, and gesture inseparable. He heard her arms move, and pause.

A word from him always freed her words, and now a touch from him would free her movement. But though he took great joy in draining her of praise, he hardly wanted her arms. That is, more than he wanted them he didn't want them. Beyond a certain point he had the habit of reserve—a habit not sought after, not cultivated, but instinctive. About his other habits providence might consult with him and listen to him, but about this he had not been consulted any more than about the shape of his bones.

"So now I can go?" he asked, and fell.

CHAPTER X

I

SKELLOW GRANGE was like an hotel in its perpetual preparation for guests and the expert impersonal provision made for every comer. The house and gardens and all the business and the traffic were conducted like a parliament, of which almost every cottager for miles around was a member, with a sense of responsibility. It was a great highway. The mistress of it all passed by rather like a stranger.

Mrs. Rutherglen often felt inclined to accompany Millie on her frequent visits to the Grange; she said that she had no objection to running in informally; but Mr. Rutherglen, jealous for her dignity, forbade her to go to the Grange unless she was especially invited.

She soon began to talk of going as a duty. "I suppose I ought," she said, in her husband's hearing. —"Just to show that there's no unfriendliness on *my* side. After all, it's the same blood, and I do think that ought to go for something; one is ready to make allowances. Well, I'll come up with you to-day, Millie, when you go." This was a bold attempt. Mr. Rutherglen sitting in his chair, continued reading, so that she thought he was going to allow it. She was just about to make an unobtrusive exit from the room when he said in his low effortless voice: "You'll stay where you are."

An invitation came through Clive, and it was very

glowing as it fell from his lips. "We will have a party," said Clive, careful to show them all his innocent excitement. Millie was perfectly quiet in her pleasure, just as he knew she would be. He always so rejoiced in drawing out from people their distinctive qualities that fascinated him. Effie clasped her hands together, pushing herself forward to obtrude on him the excited response she made to the wonderful suggestive pleasure he had put in his voice. She stretched her arms out in front, pressed together as far as possible. She was saying to him with all her mind: "And look, I am excited too!" He saw how she thrust her response so eagerly at him. "How simply wonderful!" she said, wheeling round on her feet, if he moved, so as to be always in front of him. For a long time it had been her habit quite unconsciously to shift her position if she suddenly found herself out of his sight. That was often why she changed her chair, though she did not notice why.

"One can't go on for ever without a party," said Clive. "Once the thing was put to Mrs. Ingram she saw it in a perfectly reasonable light. I told her that existence in this world carries with it certain obligations"—

"I think you did quite rightly," put in Mrs. Rutherglen.

"Well, she and I have been putting our heads together. You never knew such a party as this will be. I suppose I know something about parties." Effie laughed loudly. She found the mock-boastful tone in which he said this exceedingly witty. He gave her one of his long humble looks; there was a little tense silence until he had finished.

He found in his pocket a note for Mrs. Rutherglen.

"Next Wednesday," she said, having read it. "I do hope papa can manage it, dear." He was out of hearing in the next room, but even so they could feel

him in the very midst of them. "I think six o'clock is a very odd hour," she said. "I dare say she knows best, but I dare say many people will think it very singular and inconvenient. Still, we can order tea early, dear. How papa will get me there I don't know, for I couldn't walk. However, I'll leave that to him, and he'll be quite certain to act for the best."

Millie asked Clive if it would be an out-of-door party. While he was answering, Clive heard Effie say abstractedly: "All right, mamma." She always said it after a pause, as if she must each time go through the same little process of unwillingness being overcome by the feeling that it was a pity her mother should not be answered.

There was growing excitement in the house until next Wednesday. With the coming of the actual day there was the relief of being able to give time and energy to personal preparations, without even any pretence of any other thoughts. Mrs. Rutherglen was fastened into a tight silk dress some hours before the starting-time. A steadily-increasing fullness of figure sometimes gave her an uneasy fear that she was getting too stout; at other times she decided that this was merely to have a fine figure, and the uneasiness vanished.

A carriage came down from the Grange to call for them. Mr. Rutherglen, still in his shirt-sleeves, looked down on it from an upper window. "It'll seat the four of us," he said. He actually was a little excited, which changed his voice in the least degree. Mrs. Rutherglen rustled away to tell the girls they could drive; they hastened to refuse. Millie said they would look such a family all crowding in together. Effie said: "I really couldn't think of driving, mamma." They both felt it would be impossible to sit with their father in the carriage. Their fear

of him to-day was a little more horribly personal than the normal fear. In a strange way they both longed that he should not see them in their best dresses and with their carefully-done hair, and they dreaded seeing him in his best suit and hat and pepper-and-salt tie.

But Effie, running down to look at herself in a long glass in the hall, met her father there.

"Oh, father," she said quickly and unusually, "how nice you look! I think that's a lovely coat!"

"Oh, you do, do you," said her father scornfully.

Harry Adams came to walk with the girls, but they did not start much before the carriage, because Millie was not ready, and could not be induced to hurry at the risk of sacrificing any of the effect she was achieving. Effie, with her gloves on, sat on a wooden chair in the middle of her room, her heart filled with gloom because Millie was late. Her door was ajar, and she sat and listened in a fever of impatience.

Mrs. Rutherglen, before the glass, had been very pleased; she had even entertained the idea of eclipsing her daughters. She imagined that some people, if only a few, might say: "Personally, I don't think they touch the mother." She seemed to hear those very words, spoken in pleasant manly tones.

But when Millie came, in her leisurely contained way, out of her room, she looked so radiantly beautiful that Mrs. Rutherglen was shocked into doubt and insecurity. She felt that whatever her own personal success might or might not be, there was at any rate a reverse glory in being Millie's mother.

She was, in fact, obliged to have recourse to this triumph during the party. For her dress, which had seemed so exactly perfect at home that she had hardly liked to sit down in it for fear anything should be altered, seemed nothing at the party, and she had a miserable lonely feeling that she had really lost her

figure, and that all her little familiar arts to make herself beautiful—her tightness, her powder, and her expressions—were blatantly conspicuous and did not deceive anyone who looked at her. If anyone did look, it was only just to look away again. Her own insignificance came creeping about her skin, with that horrible feeling of too-intimate and degrading closeness to oneself that one can have. The sight of Millie was balm for her wound. She frequently said: "Mrs. Ingram has taken such an uncommon fancy to my eldest daughter, Millicent;—that's the one, over there, with the fair hair and the dark eyes—rather unusual-looking, some people think. Really, it seems impossible for Mrs. Ingram to see too much of her. I don't know why it is, I'm sure. . . ."

But when Mrs. Rutherglen took her seat beside her husband in the carriage she had no thought but of a more personal triumph.

The way by road to Mrs. Ingram's house was very roundabout, checked and perverted and thrust away by fields and streams. There were many ways in which the walkers could save distance, leaving the road and taking up little paths that cut off acute corners. The carriage-horses went at an elegant pace, but even when the carriage had got so far away as to look like a speck in the distance, the walkers would soon come on it again close at hand.

Mr. Rutherglen occasionally glanced uneasily over his shoulder. He felt like an unfortunate player at that game on a board when a nice little tin horse, in whom all your interest is centred, is suddenly obliged to go back, to re-travel the painted road, and leap once more the white gates. It irked Mr. Rutherglen considerably each time the carriage lost its advantage.

II

"You know," said Clive, talking to Mrs. Ingram before the party, "you must try to like Effie Rutherglen better. I am immensely pleased that you love Millie, but you must take any opportunity you can to know Effie too."

"Well, dear, I will. But if I am a foolish old woman, with foolish prejudices, you mustn't mind me."

"I know that they are extraordinarily different. You ought to know them both, if only just in order to appreciate their differences, which are interesting."

"I like to hear anything you say about them. Of course they are the most interesting people in the world to me now, seeing how much you love them."

"Well, notice their curious distinct little ways, and you will be amused. For instance, Millie, you know, if she has anything clever or amusing to say, wilfully deadens the voice in which she says it; she scorns to let her voice or manner help her. Well, now Effie is so engrossed in her manner, and expresses herself so much by it, that her actual words are often quite unimportant and even incoherent."

"Well, dear, she makes me feel strained and anxious; I'm afraid to look at her face. She can't clothe her face at all. In her sister I feel such confidence. However, I must like her. I grow very obedient, don't I?"

"You do, my darling. It's such a responsibility for me." They smiled into each other's eyes.

III

Effie, hurrying along a garden path, met Clive.

"I was just wanting you," she said. "I have something to show you; can you come quickly?"

"What have you got to show me?"

"Some roses."

As he went with her he felt almost jealous of her deep hurried excitement—it was his own idiosyncrasy. When they stood in the little circular rose-garden he again felt at a loss; she was out-doing him in joy. He turned all his watchfulness and appreciation suddenly on to her instead of to the roses; she felt it fall on her like sunshine. It gave her a wonderful frightened confidence in her manner, because she felt his approval.

"You know, I can never get used to roses," said Effie. "I don't know what it is they do to me when they are strong and glowing like this. You know, I also love a quite different kind of flower—well, sun-flowers, for instance. But with these lovely things —Oh I feel so soft and luxurious and grand." She smiled always as she spoke, and her smile prevented anything she said from being perfectly simple. He stood with his head a little bent down in his attentiveness, so that even from his superior height he seemed to look up at her from beneath his low straight brows, palpably sensitive and humble and observing.

"Oh, I am glad I'm not a writer," said Effie, bound to go on talking, "as I used so much to long to be. You know you couldn't, if you were writing a book, make an impression by just saying: 'There were red and yellow and white and pink roses, all very fresh and bright.' That wouldn't be good enough for art. I should have to have ideas about them, and exaggerate them and select them."

"And do you resent ideas, you reader of Shelley?"

"Well, just look at these! Aren't they enough in themselves? Fancy thinking of adding anything to the mere statement of them! When I first saw them I thought I must write a poem—"

"Oh, you did?"

"Yes, but then it would be just—'fresh roses'; that's all. And it made me quite angry to think that the world would not consider that a perfect poem."

Clive smiled at her. "Think carefully, Effie, before you withhold that poem from the world. Don't be merely vindictive."

Effie laughed and touched his arm. Sometimes she seemed unable to keep her hands off him, and used any sudden movement or laughter or surprise as an excuse to put her hand on him for a moment. He watched her; he saw that he had made her impulses even bigger than her self-consciousness, which was already great. To indulge her impulse to touch him she did awkward little things, which self-consciousness would ordinarily have prevented. It was a familiar stage in the history of his friendships—when, instead of having impulses of his own, he almost coldly watched the impulses of his friend.

And her talk about the flowers he a little resented. Generally she had only one excitement, her excitement in him. He liked her incoherent with her shyness and love,—not talking.

While he stood in the rose-garden with Effie he always glanced at the people who wandered about near by, in bright clothes and with a slightly bored expectant look on their faces. While it was still dusk, people were wandering about looking at the kennels and the flowers. A short time before, Clive had caught a glimpse of a girl arriving with a group of people; she was beautiful in an open eager way, and though Clive had lost sight of her he wondered from time to time who and where she was. As a matter of fact he happened never to see her again, and he soon forgot her, but just now he felt eager to

go where there were more people, and perhaps see her and talk to her.

It was breathlessly still in the rose-garden, with a grey uneventful sky; Effie could have fancied that the world was respecting this hour of hers, this time with Clive; it was so hushed. When he gradually drew her away towards the opening in the yew hedge she followed painfully. She had her processes of pain and jealousy extraordinarily similar to Millie's. A man of compelling characteristics can practically turn every friend he has into one person.

Indoors, sitting at one of the long tables in the beautiful hall, she watched him. He had her beside him; their understanding was such that he could not have arranged otherwise. But she felt infinitely distant from him; he paid her no particular attention. Having pleased himself and at the same time fulfilled his obligation by putting her at his side, it now pleased him to revel in the crowd.

She watched his excitement for the people, his absent-mindedness for her. His beauty and ease and wit seemed all too sufficient an explanation. She felt with the deepest comprehension how any gathering of people irresistibly drew him out to be beautiful and important and brilliant to them in their numbers; and she, just because she was one, was bound to be inferior to many. It was very logical; it was arithmetic.

When he came among people who were strangers to him he had an urgent task to perform; he had to impress those people with what he was. He planted a remark among them; he could say quick brilliant things. He unleashed his enthusiasms. He spoke of the water he loved—but generally not of diving unless he was questioned, when he would look slightly surprised, and humble. When he was questioned he soon spoke of it very eagerly, and anyone who knew him

well might see him watching, in a simple anxious way, the effect he made. And all the time he was drawing people in. He would then perhaps tell of a rare bird that he had seen that day, just touching England in its way from northern to southern latitudes. He gave it with a great grave enthusiasm, so that that was what one attended to. And now people did not take their eyes from him.

Effie was very sad. She ate a piece of his bread once, and felt a little comforted. She imagined someone exclaiming: "Look, she eats his bread!" and herself replying: "Oh yes; that is nothing out of the way for us. You see, we are particularly close friends." Once she spoke to him in a confidential intimate voice, so that he had to bend his head to hear, which perhaps rather worried him.

"I always feel a little strange with so many people," she said. "But I do love seeing you with them all when they admire you so," she went on through some humble lying instinct. As he bent to her she saw that his eye was kind but a little astray.

Millie, at another of the tables, was exulting in the beauty and brilliance of the scene, conscious of its utter suitability to her tastes and inclinations. She gave up the thought of Clive, or put it away to where the pain could hardly touch her excitement. She knew with some scorn just how Effie was suffering to see that in this crowd he was not for any individual one's possessing, and she congratulated herself on a certain immunity she had, born of an older knowledge of him. And since it was not open to herself or to Effie to possess him she could relax her vigilant indignation.

Furniture that she considered perfectly right, and delicate food, and a gathering of people who had a certain conventional code of easy manners and assumed that she had the same, made an extraordinary

appeal to her senses. She happened to be at the head of the long narrow table. There was something so exquisite in her pose, in her unembarrassed manner, and her charming languid expressions that it was actually, to those who were sitting near her, a matter of moment if she turned to say something in her sweet quiet voice, or dropped her eyelids, or smiled.

Throughout the evening she remained thus conscious of the appropriateness of the surroundings and of her own beauty and power. She was frequently aware of her mother pointing to her, but she was hardly annoyed because that was all part of her general realization that she was a centre of interest. Once Clive, seeing her admired, and immediately quickened to want her, sent her a long look. Her heart beat so quickly that she could hardly bear it, but she said to herself soothingly: "Not now, not now!" There was a row of old Persian tiles fixed into the white wall opposite to her; she looked again towards them, knowing that they gave her perfect pleasure—and Clive was not perfect for her.

Harry Adams was hovering about her the whole evening, which was quite as it should be. It seemed appropriate that the people around her should not only admire her themselves but should watch her being particularly admired. She did not appear to take much notice of him, but she found time to pause and consider. "It's not only this evening that he's like this," she thought; "it's always, really—whenever he sees me. It is curious. He was thrown so much with Effie,—all those weeks. Yet he doesn't seem ever to have thought of her, and now he has fixed on me!—so certainly, and as it were innocently, never dreaming, probably, what I might need in a man, nor how much I might find him wanting." His very incapability of understanding her intelligence gave him a kind of at-

traction; not loving her for that, he must have found some other cause in her for his obstinate love. Mere beauty he had rejected in Effie when he was her almost daily companion. Her considerations left Millie with the pleasing sense that Harry Adams knew of something lovable and irresistible in her which she herself had overlooked.

Clive grew more and more happy as the evening wore on. There were friends of his staying in the house—two men with whom he had on many and many an occasion done happy wild things. They gradually infused the party with their particular kind of gaiety. Clive poured out light-hearted jokes. Effie's little shrill laugh was first and longest. She followed him about, sometimes actually pushing her way. He was conscious of her—intent, her lips apart, her eyes so hanging on him that she unconsciously imitated his expressions; and her laugh almost aggressively ready and amused. Mrs. Ingram often turned away from the sight of her face.

In a certain place in the garden a band was playing some music from *Parsifal*. Here Effie followed Clive, on the edge of a group. Here, too, she lost him, through staring too long at the conductor's absurd fascinating back. Clive went off to a distant part of the garden, to do a thing that he loved. He and his friends swung themselves into some giant trees in the dark. There was laughter and shouting and refined little screams from all the people who gathered underneath. Before he began to climb he just noticed that Effie had not followed him for a wonder. He was amused, in a perfectly kind fond way, at having evaded her, and imagined her looking for him with the same expression as when she had looked for him to show him the roses—a characteristic expression, gloomy and hopeless and determined. Clive had that

happy pestered feeling of a man who has just succeeded in giving the slip to a too-affectionate dog.

Nevertheless, when he came down from his tree, where he had done some brave deeds, he was quite sorry she had not turned up, to be thrilled by watching him, and to catch her breath in fear for his safety, and to reward him with her eyes of extraordinary praise.

CHAPTER XI

I

THE night after the party Mr. Rutherglen began to yawn early as the family sat together after supper. Each yawn was a protracted affair, with a sequence of varying sounds; and when it had finally subsided his family listened for the next.

"Well, I'm sleepy to-night," he said at last.

"Yes, dear, after last night," said Mrs. Rutherglen.

"Well, I don't know why; I'm sure I never spent a quieter evening in my life."

"You appeared to be enjoying yourself with those gentlemen you were talking to," said Mrs. Rutherglen. "You were in fits of laughter. I'm sure I don't know how you were amusing yourselves; I won't inquire. I kept on coming to look at you, but of course you didn't notice *me*."

Mr. Rutherglen grunted. "Fits of laughter?" he said. "How you do run on! We may have smiled if the occasion arose."

Mrs. Rutherglen did not want to go to bed, so she kept up the conversation.

"What did you talk about, dearie?"

She had never learnt in all these years the kind of question her husband would not dream of troubling to answer, though her daughters had learnt perfectly as it were for her.

"We'll talk about bed now," said Mr. Rutherglen, getting heavily up. "Come along, Annie; bring the light." Mrs. Rutherglen went with him, an unwilling martyr with a falsely cheerful face.

Millie and Effie were left alone sitting one on each side of the table, the lamp and the ink-pot between them. Millie was writing letters; Effie had worked at her Italian for an hour by the clock, and now was reading the French version of a Russian novel. She fidgeted a good deal, changing the position of her book, and shifting her feet with a sharp, impatient movement. At last she said:

"Oh, Millie, what a noise you do make biting the end of your pen!"

"Of course I do," said Millie, lightly. She could be exceedingly exasperating.

Later on there came a pause in the irritating noise, while she said: "What's the date?"

When Millie asked her something, Effie generally answered with a kind of hasty zeal.

"The fifteenth," she said quickly.

Soon there was an impatient exclamation from Millie.

"If you look at that paper you will see it is the sixteenth," she said coldly. "I didn't ask you merely so as to hear you speak."

"Oh, dear!" said Effie, quite distressed.

"You might have simply said you didn't know, and I shouldn't have messed up my letter," said Millie, in her frigid voice.

"I *did* know," said Effie.

"Oh! Then why did you tell me wrong?"

"I knew it was the fifteenth when I told you; but I was wrong, and now I know it is the sixteenth." So Effie, in her own way, could be irritating too. Millie expressed her contempt by a silence which Effie tried not to pay attention to.

Effie was quite surprised when, later on, she heard Millie's voice again; she had thought they would probbably go to bed without exchanging another word.

But soon Millie said: "Have you any money to spare for the shortest possible time, Effie?"

"Oh, no, not a farthing," said Effie.

Millie said no more. But unfortunately one could never feel quite easy under a certain silence of hers.

II

"My darling,—There happen to have been so many distractions here lately that I did not write as quickly as I had intended to tell you how disastrous I should consider it if you gave up the business after such a brief trial. If I urge you to persevere you will probably tell yourself that it is because I don't realize how slack and unprofitable it is. So I tell you that I do thoroughly realize that—also all that you say about the rivalry, and the most unfortunate failure of the builder, and the train service being so much better to Whitley and Crandon and those other suburbs. Well, you know, it almost makes me a little impatient to hear you bring up those arguments. You must remember how we went into them thoroughly before you started there. This slackness was perfectly foreseen by us when we discussed it all so much, and we knew the causes (though not of Catterill's failure, of course—I admit that is most unfortunate). We decided then that there was a good chance of success in time, though for the first year or so, until the railway actually came into possession of their land, it would be difficult. Now you tell me these things as reasons why you should give up after barely seven months' trial, as if they were drawbacks that you had only lately discovered. Don't you remember we always said you were obliged to take the business when you did if only to keep some one else out of it, and that you would just have to hang on until the building of the branch line practically to your door, and the in-

evitable coming of builders and houses and people. Now suddenly this seems all to count for nothing.

"Do please write and tell me that you will stay. I shall be quite uneasy until I hear that you will. You know how you have sometimes taken my advice and been glad of it afterwards. Now don't be obstinate, Oliver.

"The idea of your coming to see me here is so mad that I can't even comment on it.

"Well, now, to turn to other matters. I won't bore you with a history of parties and calls. We have far too much of the latter—you can imagine how dull.

"I have just been out in the garden giving a tremendous shaking to the old plum-tree there; I felt as if I was scolding it terribly. But nothing came down. I shook it enough to shake the life out of it—and of myself too. I felt so angry with those stupid late plums which haven't, not one of them, begun to grow weak in the stalk.

"I shall look forward eagerly to your letter which will tell me you are staying."

III

Effie went out in the early afternoon, and Millie and her mother were at home to Mr. Adams when he called. It was two days after the party. Millie had watched her sister go—probably to meet Clive, she thought. She puzzled about Clive, reluctant to believe that he did not really love her ultimately. "Perhaps he thinks that by neglect he will gain greater possession of my heart, so as to have a more perfect climax of love. Well, my dear Clive," she thought coldly, "you are making a great mistake. Treatment of that kind might win you some hearts, but I happen to be so made that it merely alienates me," she threatened him. But she never really believed in her inmost heart that

he had such a motive. He was abandoning her by his own inclination. As she sat thinking, for one moment something cried out in her that she must have his pity if she could not have his love. And then it froze her heart to realize that if she suffered it was her affair, and hers alone—not Clive's in the least. She felt the futility of trying to pin that creature down to any suffering.

The appearance of Harry Adams made a dreary kind of relief from her thoughts.

"I would love you to come and see my little place sometime," he said. "It isn't much, really, I dare say, only anything that's your own—it seems to make a difference, doesn't it? I hope you'll both come."

Mrs. Rutherglen said: "We shall be delighted, I'm sure, at any time—especially while the weather lasts. Let me see, you were born there, I believe?"

"Yes, but it's a different place now from what it was then."

"But if all I hear is true," said Mrs. Rutherglen, "you won't die there, if one may speak of such a thing."

"No," said Harry, with a nervous laugh; "that sad event will take place in quite different surroundings, I suppose. Though to tell you the truth I'd just as soon stay where I am."

"I did hear on the best authority that you were to come in for Mrs. Ingram's property," said Mrs. Rutherglen, "though with moving about so much and getting out of communication I never knew quite for certain. And it's so delicate to inquire, even when it's all in the family. Well, I do congratulate you."

"Oh, yes, it's quite true," said Harry. "My uncle left it to her for her life and then to me. Of course it means a lot of money. . . ." He looked at Millie with all his simple anxiety perfectly apparent in his face. "I've never really wanted it at all. Only just

lately. . . . When you think it might be useful to anyone belonging to you, then—well, you can't help being glad then."

"It's very nice of you not to think more of yourself," said Millie kindly.

IV

In the meantime Effie sauntered along the roads. Lunch at Skellow Grange was at two. Anyone setting out from there soon after lunch for a walk or climb or swim would be likely to come along the road at about this hour.

And so, in a little panic because what she had wanted was accomplished, she saw three men come swinging along towards her; they were all very attractive to look upon, but the one with the extra outstanding beauty was Clive. He gave her his warm, friendly greeting, which included her in all the company of things which were delighting him to-day—his friends, and the cool light, and the roaring wind.

"Well met, little Effie!" he cried. "Now why not turn and walk a little way with us?" As she turned she tried to look as though she were relinquishing a contrary purpose.

To meet them, as they walked, there came flying down the road the scent of the late, sweet hay. This was not a country for scents; the ground was too rocky, and the winds too persistent. They were all arrested by the unusual sweetness in the air.

"And here comes this great, angry, indignant wind," said Clive, "with the smell of the hay clinging to it. And do you know, Effie, it's like a great beast infuriated because it can't get rid of a feather on its paw." She hung on his words; she was so obviously there to hear him, and see him, and praise him.

Clive's companions had both been interestedly aware of her the night before. One of them, a hand-

some, dark young man, with stray locks on his forehead, and romantic eyes, and a rather pleasing drawl, said:

"Tell Maxwell, Miss Rutherglen, that it isn't quite the day on which to climb the mountain."

Effie, watching Clive, and seeing him shake his head and smile his determination, said almost with indignation: "Oh, but I think it is a very nice day; well, I mean it's not too warm, which makes it just nice for climbing. And the wind isn't so terrible really." But every now and then there came a great gust in which she could scarcely breathe, and which flattened her clothes to her body in front, and blew back the hair from her pure young face.

Clive's other friend, a painter, watched that face as it was turned up to Clive—sensitive, unconscious, ready all the time on the very brink of responsiveness to anything Clive might say. Her too-ready laughter, which made a rather sad and uneasy impression on the man who was watching her, stood nervously ready in her eyes, and then came sounding out on her voice almost before he had expressed himself.

The painter tried to put a name to the Old Master who surely must have recorded her type—as all interesting essential beauties can be classified in that manner. Effie, though one felt she was in art, was a little difficult to locate. He had to tell himself so many times that it was not Tintoretto that there must have been some obstinate truth in the idea.

Clive said: "Sure we're not taking you too far, Effie?"

"Oh, no," she said. "Really it doesn't matter."

At the foot of the mountain he said: "Trot home now, little Effie, and thank you for putting us on our way."

"Can't I come?"

Clive smiled, half unwilling. "But you don't love

climbing, Effie." He consulted his friends' faces, and seeing in one embarrassment and in the other pity, Clive's pride was touched and pleased. He put his hand on Effie's shoulder, as he might indulgently have rewarded the too-faithful hound she resembled, saying: "Come and try. But if you get tired you must stop. Up there a great wind will be wishing us anywhere but where we are."

It was not a successful experiment. Clive held her hand, but she literally could not snatch from that roaring wind as it went by sufficient breath for such an ascent. They took her down again the little way she had come. With her poor, nervous smile, put on like a mask, she looked very forlorn as she bade them farewell. The painter, whose admiration of women made him very gentle to them, suggested to Clive that Effie should wait for them at a neigbouring farm-house, where they would join her and have tea, and walk home together—a proposal welcomed by Clive with enthusiasm. So Effie went cheerfully off to wait.

The others climbed again at double their former speed. Speech was impossible, and in the midst of their silence Effie still walked with them, and pressed her soft body against the wind, in her eager, innocent pursuit. Clive thought of her with all his vanity stirred. These men before whom she laid bare her devotion were two of his close friends, two of a chosen intimate group, all conspicuous for some talent, people whom he cared to impress, people who loved him, and whom he loved. In his glowing pride he considered her love very little from her point of view, but as something to add to all those things with which he impressed his friends.

Whatever may have been small and weak in this was compatible with his having in his soul illimitable feelings of love and joy, and as he lay on the mountain-

summit, with the muscles still twitching in his body from their strain, Effie passed from his mind, and he was as remote from any petty consciousness of self-triumphs as any angel in heaven.

It was already late afternoon; the sky was blue; the colour of the sunshine was that mellow gold which it takes on with its lengthening beams. Little clouds that hurried through the sky were very rounded and full of form, caught by the low gold light, and each with a warm, sunny shadow to the east. And Clive lay with his face up to the sky.

His perceptions were swift and abnormal; the adjective with which he described a person whom he had only once met would astound that person's friends by its penetration and discovery. His sympathetic understanding of people tempted him to intimate relations; and he was as swift and sure as a vulture to perceive any triumph or victory of his own powers. But equally abnormal was the way in which those perceptions could be recalled from where they strayed among men, recalled from where they were focused on his own successes, and become folded in and dedicated to some single, selfless worship. His eager passionate wish to be foremost and beautiful was not an exclusive habit of mind. Another habit, more rare, more secret, was to sever the links with which he related all the world to himself, and to become merely the disembodied spirit of praise and love and worship. In this mood he would lie, like Shelley, in an absorption of hours' duration, so complete, so ethereal, that of those few persons who experience it, it generally makes a poet or a saint. And so he might yet be either.

What Clive showed of his enthusiasms to his friends was not exactly this absorption and worship, but derivative from it. His absorption was necessarily secret and not advertising, but in his desire to be note-

worthy and beloved he, as it were, imitated it for public use. People might sometimes be a little conscious that there was drama in his fine effusions of delight and praise, and that they did not happen inevitably, either as regards time or pitch. One might sometimes just faintly suspect that they were called up. If this were so, Clive was not, at any rate, assuming qualities which did not belong to him. He was only recalling and imitating, for his public, the secret experiences of his heart. He knew the private power of adoration; he copied it publicly, so that all might see it in him.

This was not conspicuous to his friends. It might, indeed, take many years of even an astute person's observation to have the first faint suspicion of his enthusiasms, and then many years more to discover that, if they were stolen, they were stolen only from himself. And the reason this exposition is made here in detail is that those things might not otherwise transpire clearly in the record of so brief a period of his life. It is not easy to detect a man imitating himself.

With his face to the sky he now attended to nature, and no consciousness of self, and no complaint that a man's body can make of hunger or stiffness could distract or hinder him now.

His two friends were tired with the unaccustomed climb. One slept; the other looked at his watch from time to time and finally strolled over to Clive and looked down at his fine, long body lying in the sun. Beyond him was a thin line at the low edge of the sky, and that was Scotland.

"What about moving?"

"Rotten," said Clive.

"Come on."

"You are a restless chap."

"Come on; Miss Rutherglen's waiting," said the painter.

Clive jumped up. "I say! Yes, let's hurry." His vanity was again stirred because his friend had had to remind him of the girl who was waiting for him. There was a delay of a good many moments while Clive woke his other friend by means of thistle-leaves, which he pulled out of the ground. The sleeper insisted on attributing his sensations to natural causes, which a mere grunt or rub would dispel. Soon they were speeding at a break-neck pace down the mountain-side.

In the farm-house Clive made friends with the woman who gave them tea; Effie watched her being fascinated by his ways, and was glad when she went away. They had a jolly tea; Effie's nervousness, no less apparent now than before, could not distract the men from their hunger. It was indeed almost a kindness gently to ignore a person so ignominiously obsessed as she was, and conversation was of the most natural casual kind, blurted out according to the exigencies of appetite. Effie warmed her hands on the tea-pot.

Clive saw the farm-children playing in the yard; he made a point of noticing children always; he went out to them and was absent for some time. His friends, alone now with Effie, were struck by the wise, coherent way in which she could express herself. She showed to particular advantage now with her calm and dignity, and a certain sweet, proud recovery of manner, which seemed to challenge them not to remember what she was in Clive's presence.

The painter, who was her friend, wished that she could be to Clive what she was to them. Deeper than that, he thought that supposing she was to him what she was to Clive . . .

He remembered suddenly where and by whom she was represented in art. It was of a painting by Millet

that she reminded him perfectly—a painting in which a girl holds some drapery to her waist in a wood, and is surrounded by tugging infants pulling her one way.

When they had returned to the Grange he made from memory a quick sketch of it to remind Clive, who was able to recall it sufficiently to be impressed by the likeness.

CHAPTER XII

I

Soon after this there was a decided change of weather, and as the bad weather came in with extremity of cold and violence of wind and rain on the first day of October, it seemed as if winter had dawned with a tremendous will and justification.

The winter nights had a terror in them; they were so dark and loud and strong. If for any reason one lay awake and heard all that there was to hear, it seemed a marvel how one ever slept through such events.

The rocky heights were doubly forbidding now; torrents rushed by the roadsides; all day darkness was only just withholding; it fell soon.

And now at this time there was a good deal of interest in dancing; winter nights brought pleasing associations with that art. Millie and Effie had always achieved fame among partners for their proficiency wherever they had danced. Harry Adams and Millie tried their steps in the hall one day, and as soon as it was discovered how good a dancer he was, the girls were eager to be taken by him in turn. He gave Millie such unfairly long turns that Effie frowned with impatience as she sat in the cold hall watching and waiting for them to stop.

Clive had returned to London with his friends. He was away for a fortnight. He sent a postcard from the British Museum; Mrs. Rutherglen said she fancied he must "be" some one there, in one of the departments.

Effie said, with a great beating of her heart, that he had only gone there for purposes of reference.

"Well, they'll probably give him a post," said Mrs. Rutherglen.

Effie was alone with her mother. Speaking about Clive flooded her heart with joy and excitement; it was utterly impossible to be silent. She gave her mother thrilling information about a book Clive was writing. Her eyes shone and her face burned as she spoke. "They chose Clive, mamma, although of course heaps of people would have given anything to do it. It's very responsible work. Sometimes he wishes it was something that gave more scope for originality and imagination. So do I wish that. Still, as soon as it is finished he will do something more entirely congenial." Effie turned in a sudden passion of pride and sensitiveness and suspicion to look at her mother, to see if she were interested.

"That's very nice, I'm sure," said Mrs. Rutherglen. "I don't know how ever people do write books. Even if you were to sit me down with a pen and paper in front of me I don't believe I could do it. I dare say I should shtop before I'd done a shingle shentence," she said, overtaken by a yawn which she had honestly intended should not occur until she had finished speaking. "Ring for tea, Effie," she added, "or else I shall tumble off."

The postcard lay on the top of Mrs. Rutherglen's work-basket; Millie came in and read it and tossed it down again. For several days it lay about before Effie liked to take it and treasure it. And while it lay in the sitting-room Effie always knew, whatever she might be doing, when anyone looked at it or went near it or moved it. It was a kind of relief to her to stop loving her great overwhelming Clive, and just to love his writing with all her heart.

The evening Clive returned he found them dancing.

Effie was sitting in a corner on the umbrella-stand, saying to herself: "Well, Millie *is* selfish!" She loved dancing so much, and found it almost intolerable to wait. Clive came in unexpectedly. For a few moments he watched the dancing-couple, who smilingly exaggerated some eccentric steps to amuse him. Suddenly he turned and held out both arms to Effie. She was made breathless by surprise, and hesitated. She made a tremendous mistake; she thought he loved her, because her mind ran on that. She gazed at him stupidly, incredulously for a moment before she could go to meet that joy. And then she as it were came to herself, and remembered the dance. But the vision of Clive with his inviting arms held out to her was impressed ineradicably on her mind,—and with the false interpretation, not the right one. The impression had been so vivid that she could not change it into a mere mistake.

The wonder and sweetness of him then as she misunderstood him would never be forgotten.

They began to dance.

Mr. Rutherglen was away from home. They danced until a late hour; there was an occasional babel of exclamations and laughter and instruction and discussion. Now that this pastime was reinstituted with such enthusiasm they spoke of the future as if it was to be one long dance.

There were only little snatches of conversation on any other subject.

"You left your friends in London, I suppose?" Effie said to Clive. "They must have felt your going."

"They conducted themselves courageously," said Clive, smiling.

"It is so hard to imagine you in London. What would I think supposing I didn't know you and just saw you passing along a street, and knew I might never

see you again? I wonder if I shall ever see you in London."

"Oh yes, you will," he said. "Because there are things we must do. And you must see my garret where I live."

"It must be *too* exquisite," said Effie. "Now what did you do last night, for instance?"

"Last night? I was round at Harvey's studio, with one or two others. Oh, Effie, what do you think happened? We have all been frightfully impoverished, and we had drunk water with our dinner. When we got to the studio we found that some enterprising advertising grocer had delivered a sample bottle of port. Our gratitude and joy must have more than repaid the honest man if he could have seen them. Come and dance."

On this occasion Mrs. Rutherglen supplied the music from the sitting-room. Effie came once breathless to her side; she had hardly ever seen her mother play before. For those inflexible arms and stout ringed fingers to produce time and tune was a fascinating incredible trick, which Effie liked watching. At the end, Clive insisted on dancing with Mrs. Rutherglen, while Millie played; and then Harry, wishing he had been the first to think of this conspicuous gallantry, did so too.

It was a happy evening. "Don't go," said Mrs. Rutherglen, panting quite badly. "That clock's five minutes fast. Stir the fire, Effie. Oh, please don't trouble, Clive. Of course I don't know quite the newest dances, but I think I can see how they go. Well, if no one wants the sofa I shan't be sorry to put my feet up for a bit." It was nearly twelve o'clock. Had her husband been home Mrs. Rutherglen would have been summoned to bed two hours ago. As it was, she lay back on the sofa in a luxuriance of freedom and pleasure. She imagined people saying of her that she grew younger every day. And then, as habit and cir-

cumstances had so associated in her mind gratification with dishonesty, she said: "The *only* pity is that papa wasn't here to see."

The men went home through wild weather by lantern-light.

In a way they were good comrades.

"On this kind of night, you know," said Harry, before they parted on their different roads, "I sometimes fancy one might meet an escaped convict stealing through the darkness."

"Yes, this would be the night."

"Do you know what I should do?" said Harry. "I should change clothes with the poor brute."

"I dare say you would be glad to," said Clive. "If, for instance, you had on your black and white Norfolk."

"Rather!" said Harry. "I wouldn't stop to consider the loss; I should just do it."

"If we are thinking about the same coat," said Clive, "the thing couldn't be. They may be a rough set of men, but they have their little feelings."

II

Mrs. Ingram arranged to give a dance on the last day of the year.

A few days before, when "one of the babies of the year" was lately re-born, Clive and Effie were out walking.

They considered having tea at a somewhat uninviting wayside inn. Clive read the great black letters that were painted across the front of it. "I don't think we have any right to go in there," he decided. "We're not a family, and we're not commercial; it would be mean of us." Effie loved his way of discarding it.

But on their return to her home they found the house deserted. Effie prepared to get him some tea herself,

and when she got to the kitchen flew excitedly about in her tremendous hurry: it was a kind of agony to have to leave him for a minute.

She found to her dismay that the cupboard was locked—a precaution which Jean took on her rare absences. Effie could only take milk and biscuits to Clive. She smiled as she put them before him. But inwardly she thought with cold apprehension: "Of course he won't put up with this kind of thing for long."

She hid her fear with a pretence of light-heartedness.

"Make a good tea, Clive," she said, "but on the other hand don't exceed."

"I promise not to eat anything merely because it is there," he said. She stood over him. He looked at her hand on the table, and then up at her face, and his arm went round her where she stood beside him. He had had his arm on her many times before; this was different; this was new and silent and tender. Her breath came wildly, but she began to think with a kind of precision that was almost cunning. In common with her great need and her fiery heart she suddenly had a cool calculating brain, which must superintend this accomplishment of all desire, and devise and scheme so that it should not end. So according to the instructions which came from this seat of wisdom, the instincts of her heart were checked, and she made no response to him. She merely stared out of the window, oblivious, absorbed, certain that this course was the most likely to secure the continuance of the happiness. For if she appeared to him conscious and embarrassed he would probably drop his arm in confusion. The great thing was to behave as though there was nothing unusual.

She stared out of the window with her peering interested gaze, and Clive, puzzled, followed her glance to see what could so engross her. There was nothing

they had not seen a hundred times before. Hardly disappointed, he dropped his arm; and then Effie turned her eyes on him with a startled incredulous look.

Clive turned with appetite to his tea. "Draw up, little friend," he said.

"No," said Effie, "that's all for you." They often looked smiling into each other's eyes, but Effie's look was strained and seeking, and Clive's purely satisfied.

Then Millie and her mother came in.

Millie had on a rich dark red dress. Her hair and skin seemed marvellously fair when it was dark and when it was winter. She smiled beautifully at Clive. Considering her wounded heart, a manner of studied indifference merely would have been something of a success and triumph—but not good enough for Millie. In her pride and strength she went so far as to maintain a kind of cheerful coquetry, with all the heart gone out of it—coquetry without a hope. She thought sometimes with a glowing feeling of self-satisfaction: "When he leaves Effie what a conspicuous scene that girl will make!"

"We've just been over to Harry's," said Mrs. Rutherglen. "Really, I don't care who might be looking after it, it couldn't be nicer kept."

"Harry thinks of everything," said Millie. She looked at Clive, and he saw on her face that little retreating look which meant that she had something to say that she enjoyed. "Oh, so you have been over to Harry's, have you?" he thought jealously. Her look excited him and drew him to her. He had been incredibly careless of her; he hoped he had not lost her altogether.

"It's a splendid place, I know," said Clive in an impartial voice, "and yet—well, somehow one couldn't live there. Of course I like an interrupted prospect, but there—"

"Oh, I think the place is well enough," said Millie,

"but it is the household appointments which are so exceptional."

Clive sat by her on the sofa and leaned towards her with his thrilling attentiveness.

"We watched the table being prepared for tea. Harry had supplied the maid with a flat wooden triangular instrument by which she can measure at what distance to place the silver candle-sticks from the corners of the table. You see, no pains are spared."

"Well, I'm sure that's a very good plan. Don't be so silly, dear," said Mrs. Rutherglen fretfully, and went upstairs. Clive continually watched Millie.

"Mamma and I ate a huge tea in a room with a frieze. Guess, Clive, about the frieze."

"Of course I can," said Clive.

(Effie thought: "Ah, you would both like me to go away. Don't suppose I don't know that. *But I shall just stay, you see!* I would stay even if you both tried to put me out by force. I would hold on to the furniture." She thought of Clive trying to undo her fingers, pressed white to the furniture. She shivered. She sat in a dark corner, where Clive had left her. She leant forward with her elbows on her knees, her face burning, looking at them with her brilliant watchful eyes.)

"I haven't any doubt about the frieze," said Clive happily. "It is Dutch windmills."

"Well, you are wrong. It is a peninsula and a sailing-ship and a setting sun, and then a peninsula and a sailing-ship and a setting sun. . . . Oh," said Millie regretfully, "I must vanish and write letters before supper. Here comes mamma. Good-bye."

She left Effie and Clive to the kind of uneasy doubtful semi-privacy of Mrs. Rutherglen's presence.

III

Sitting in her room, Millie's face hardened, not with grief but with bitterness. This kind of happy revival in Clive made her suffer with anger. If she had been abandoned altogether perhaps her mind would have been sunk in grief; she would probably have lapsed day by day deeper into that cold sulkiness which would naturally be her refuge and her misery in affliction. But Clive, by trying to keep a hold on her, stung her to anger and resistance. She rejected him, and all the happiness he might have meant; and all the misery with which she might have mourned for him she rejected too. She turned coldly but gladly to embrace her former self, her old ambitions and independence.

CHAPTER XIII

I

For the next few days expectancy in regard to the dance was engaging the thoughts of the young people of the neighbourhood. To Effie, whom love and joy and disappointment had brought to a state of terrible disquiet, it became the one hope in a future otherwise impenetrably gloomy. But even this was a sober, restricted hope, because Clive in a crowd was only a beloved stranger.

Clive's one caress had killed any patience or contentment there might still have been in her. Her love had gathered pace; it flew on the anxious terrible journey. To have had his embrace and then to seem to lose him, gathered every stray thought back into her mind to concentrate on her grasping of Clive, to urge him to come to her, to mourn his faithlessness, to suffer instead of to rejoice at the thought of his caress. "Why won't happiness be reminiscent?" she thought. "Why will it insist on being expectant? He looked at me as though he loved me, and his arm was round me. Just because it is past, I can't feed on it and live on it. I must be mad. It is the *thing* that matters—not when it happens. In regard to when it happens, it shouldn't make the slightest difference to me whether it is to-morrow or yesterday."

Her absorption in Clive was completely established. Had she ever had any other thoughts? She marvelled to remember how not very long ago she had felt cross with Jean because her morning water had not been very hot. Also how, when her father had sat on one

of her beloved books which she had left on a chair, she had suffered and burned with a sense of injury until he got up and released it and she could carry it up to her own room again, owning it once more with almost foolish affection. Those had been quite important outstanding emotions.

Now where was her interest gone—her defensiveness, her ownership, her anger, her hunger, her sleepiness? She was empty of them all. She was on fire with one passion. Her heart thumped in her breast; if she forgot Clive for one minute she remembered him with an insufferable leap of her heart. If she woke up in the night she knew it was for good. When she woke up she had a strange moment in which she waited for the great bound of her heart which she knew would come with the first realization. So she woke, and in that moment she waited, and then the thought came, and then her heart troubled her in her breast. She came down with heavy eyes in the morning on account of this passion that would not let her sleep.

And the wayward heart-beating was not only for thoughts of Clive. The entry of any thought at all into her brain was marked by the thrilling leap of her heart. She thought it was a fine day, with the great disturbing thrill, or if she heard her mother speak to Jean in the kitchen, or the hall-door close on Millie—all these indifferent matters had some unsuspected relationship with Clive, and came with the same thrill. It was a dreadful pitch to live at.

She thought: "Is love like this to other people in the world? Do they know what a terror it is, what a passion, what an affliction to the body?"

For three days she did not see Clive. It seemed incredible that he should not have to come. She never let Millie out of her sight for a moment if she could help it.

And then there was the dance.

The night before, as she lay awake, she heard a noise, a mere unrecognizable vibration in the air, which sounded as if it was made, not by anything in the world, but by the very world itself. It was dreadful to have to think of the world itself as an identity, instead of merely of things in it. She was terrified of the vast unknown; there was no limit to the great void which lacked Clive to its very verge.

"Oh," she remembered, just at the breaking-point, "we will dance to-morrow, he and I."

II

Everything that happened the next night contributed to increase in Effie that violence of feeling, and to hasten it on to the climax which occurred within twenty-four hours after the dance.

The dancing took place in a great white room; it was so vast that it was possible to be careless of space, and there were dark green tubs of bay standing here and there at the sides. Low electric lights hung round the room, making bright spaces on the white panelled walls. The polished floor-surface stretched away in long perspective of narrow beams. Over every inch of that space Effie's eager feet were to travel before the night was over.

She danced early with Clive. Their dancing together was a very perfect performance; such rhythm and grace and variety were not excelled by any couple in the room.

"How absolutely perfect!" said Clive at the end of the first dance. "There can be no other dancer like you, Effie." And Effie replied with her quick praise, which she knew he liked: "It's you that are perfect."

He had taken her programme and written "Clive"

four times, while she watched jealously his hand moving down the card, pausing to choose and write. She tried to take a reasonable view of this number, commiserating with him as he complained that he had to dance with nearly every one in the room. She never lost consciousness of him for an instant as he wandered about the room, making a little stir wherever he went. Of all he approached, Millie was perhaps the only one who lifted frank careless eyes to him, without a sign of unusual consciousness. Clive looked very splendid to-night.

They were a good set of dancers who had assembled here, though Clive never found a partner quite so good as Effie, nor Effie one so good as Clive. Effie never danced with anyone who did not want to dance with her again as often as he might, and her card was rapidly becoming filled when Clive, in passing, said: "One more, Effie—we must!" and wrote "C. M." where he found a space.

With a great deal of joy in her heart Effie gave herself up to the pleasure of one exquisite indefatigable dance after another.

Even her most tender thoughts of Clive had not now the special tenderness of privacy. She loved him as it were through the crowd, by means of the crowd.

A man who wished most persistently to dance with her was a friend of Clive's. Effie was very gay with him, and they danced beautifully together. He was a man of between thirty and forty years of age, with a grave manner; but one felt that something bright and intelligent was, as it were, concealed about him. And the little that he said had an indefinable importance.

So Effie, who had discovered long ago that men spoke about her after dancing with her, imagined him saying at some time to Clive: "What a beautiful

dancer and attractive girl Miss Rutherglen is!" Clive might reply: "There are two of them; Millicent is the fair one." To which the man who admired her would reply decisively: "Oh no, then I mean the other." Surprise and even consternation on the part of Clive, and a jealous scene with him, in which he forbids her ever again to dance with anyone but himself. . . . Such rapture Effie made for herself in her thoughts.

And at intervals there occurred her dances with Clive, and in the cleverness of her perfectly agreeing steps she knew at last the joy of excelling and succeeding in something with him, after all the repression and incompetence and disadvantage of her long nervousness.

But half way through the evening she began to wish that she had never come.

III

Clive led Millie to the garden.

"Now come down to my little wood," he said.

"No. I should be late."

"Yes, but leave the next dance; I haven't got enough of you to satisfy me."

She gave him a strange look. "And yet we have a good many dances."

Now all that was weak in him, all that there was of the undisciplined child, was uppermost. "I wish they were all with you," he complained. "But you are so busy dancing with other people. . . ." He meant especially with one person.

She beheld his easy jealousy, and in her cool wisdom was never deceived by it. Her steady guarded look took in this aspect of him. It came into her mind that one might love him, wildly, unbearably, even for his very faults; but such a dangerous thought she banished with all her determination. Her only safety

and relief lay in her stern judgment and dissatisfaction.

Precisely as the music started she turned to go indoors. He detained her for a moment to say: "Promise that we can talk before the end!" Millie took a sudden resolution. "Yes," she said, "I promise."

As Clive stepped into the room he met Effie's faithful eyes, flagrantly faithful for all the room to see. Some feeling of disquiet made him say to himself: "It is understood that I am not like other men. It must be quite clear that I don't wish to bind anyone or to be bound myself. I must love universally. There is so much beauty, and I see it and know it all." And yet for a moment he looked strangely, unfamiliarly unhappy.

He danced often with Millie; he rejoiced in her to-night; he had almost felt she had slipped away from him. What made his weakness a kind of innocence in him was that his realization of her individual charm was so keen and delicate that it made him seem to have certain natural rights in her. His keen vision made people known to him in all their subtlety and distinctness. Such knowledge was a kind of ownership.

Later, he and Millie stood on the verge of the wood. They had come in silence, and Millie was the first to speak.

"I am going to tell you something, Clive."

"Millie, what?" he said.

"You would know soon in any case, but I will tell you myself."

"Is it something about you, Millie?"

He had a terribly tender way of looking at a person, following with his anxious, humble, persistent eyes every movement of the face he looked at. So that if one moved one's head his head moved too, following, and of that one was very conscious.

"Dear me, yes, it is very much about me," she said in her cool way.

"Tell me quickly. And yet I feel I know."

"Oh, don't deprive me of making my little sensation," she smiled.

"But I don't want sensations from you; I just want you quietly."

"Well, there is really something exceedingly quiet about this sensation," said Millie.

"You are going to tell me that you love someone. After all, I know very little of your heart, you strange, secret girl. I have often wondered just what emotions live there, what memories, perhaps, from the past before I knew you."

His pride suddenly dreaded to hear, in this revelation of hers, that she had been loving someone else all the time.

"No, this is really recent history that you are going to hear," she said. She reddened suddenly and her heart beat quickly as she told the news. "I am engaged to Harry." She was so unprepared for her own emotion that it made her almost wonder if after all, quite unknown to herself, she had some romantic feeling for Harry.

Clive looked down on the ground and said, "I'm sorry." Millie felt a great bitterness against him for this easy statement which it cost him so little to make. She longed for things to be difficult for him, or at least less easy than he always contrived to make them for himself.

So she said, "Why?" looking at him very innocently. Inwardly she thought: "He shall be pinned down; he will find he can't just say things to me; he will have to mean what he says."

But she was only beaten in this, because her question did not disconcert Clive at all. He took hold of a long chain that hung from her neck and looked down at it lying in his hand while he said with some feeling:

"Isn't it horribly selfish of me? I dread to lose a friend. But really it needn't happen. I mean, when there are the real things, as there are between you and me, nothing can make any difference."

She was amazed and unwilling to think him sincere, to know that his conduct with her was more innocent than vicious. There was sincerity in his eyes. By his very nature he eluded the whole of the pain; he was happy and free; she even bitterly felt him to be superior and meritorious in being without passion.

In her, passion burned for a moment while words burst from her heart but were never spoken. "I will not be engaged to anyone; only love me a little, that is all I want." But she, with a positive dislike of her own heart, stifled its longing. She had seemed to read in Clive's grave demeanour a rejection of her longing, as if he had said to her reproachfully, "I mustn't—*now*."

"Of course he is in the right," she thought bitterly. "I am full of vulgar wishes; he is fine and austere. How long shall I continue to be this low unhappy creature?" Her own pride mocked at her. She had her escape. . . . Oh the blessed joy of resentment!

IV

A girl fainted and lay across a chair, and in the room there was a stir of helpless excitement. Effie watched Clive's quiet effectiveness in this little emergency. He lifted the girl in his arms and carried her to the garden-door and there set himself to restore her. He was utterly business-like and powerful and successful. And Effie watched him. She was easily panic-stricken by catastrophe, and proportionately worshipped cool, strong action.

This incident emphasized the feeling she had always

had for Clive's bodily strength and bigness, his wisdom and his fearlessness. She touched that final pinnacle of love when a girl remembers the dangers that are in life, and knows that one man has power in arm and mind to save her if only he will be by her side,—knows that in the last certain danger of death he will still be wise about it, and strong.

So, feeling that, she loved him more. And it was all there in her heart, with closed outlets.

Clive and she spoke together for a few moments just before she left. He told her, though she knew without his saying so, how happy he had been. She knew that he was not one of those people who look ahead to happiness and then fall short in enjoyment when the hour comes. He had a way of making the occasion justify every hope there had been of it.

"But you know," he said, "the seven or so dances I had each with you and Millie are what made the evening precious to me."

"Five," said Effie quickly.

"Oh, five with you."

"In fact," said Effie, with her nervous smile, "I only had four with Clive, but then one with 'C. M.'"

"I am sorry you had 'C. M.'; he has done heavy duty sometimes to-night, and you must have found him a bore." Clive was fresh and happy. He could not help liking to talk about himself with Effie, because the atmosphere was one of intense praise and worship. It was a subject which always went well.

"I'm afraid I must ask you not to say anything against him," said Effie, smiling. She made a little ring round "C. M." with her pencil on her programme. "I can't tell you how highly I thought of him," she said, absorbed with her pencil. Clive laughed and pressed her arm, turning away. Sudden tears came in her eyes so soon after her smiling. Her little bits

of praise were so futile compared with what was in her heart.

All the way home she had Tchaikowsky's *Valse des Fleurs* filling her mind. She encouraged it by silently adding expression to the persistent automatic notes. Because she felt that when that tune had gone it would leave her mind quite empty for all the pain.

In the deserted ballroom, where it seemed strange that the lights should be shining just as brightly as before, Clive leant over Mrs. Ingram's chair, while she looked at him with tired very friendly eyes.

"Now go to bed, dear," she said.

"I have to think out a careful good-night to you first," he said, smiling. "So many people have done their best by you; I don't want to be behind."

"But the quickest were the nicest."

"That young Haynes said to me when he went, 'Toot-a-loo!' Now what would you reply in a case like that?"

"I shouldn't know what to say."

"I said, 'So long. Come in some time if you're sober.' People so young as that make me feel old already."

"Well, I suppose that was an appropriate reply."

"I believe it was in the right manner," said Clive. "I think he thought so too. Those things come to one. Now I want to be just as tactful with you."

He had a hand on each arm of her chair. She loved his leisurely talk to her.

"Well, I have watched you being happy, you great enormous boy," she said, "and that will do."

"Well, you dear, it has been lovely—the nicest dance I have been to. Those Rutherglens are rare beautiful girls. . . . And here they are in this little corner of England—as if I would not have found them wherever they were."

He spoke with some feeling, and in that instant he

began again to be unhappy. He thought Millie was too good for Harry. Some suspicion that his own behaviour might have been a factor in this engagement brought an uneasiness of conscience which made him suddenly distrust the whole plan of his life.

Should all his ardour be subject to the same discipline as any other man's? Was there licence in his great unchecked enthusiasm?

He was thinking hard as he went to bed. He who had so keenly perceived beauty and yet had overlooked one crowning beauty, now discovered it with the fervent enthusiasm that was so ready in him. Discipline seemed to him the fairest thing of all. He thought he had been worshipping God, but had not carried the cross.

But this mental vigour was not stronger than the strong timely need to sleep. His great height and strength lived by jealous rule of hunger and sleep. He laid his head on the pillow and became as weak as a child.

CHAPTER XIV

I

THE late awakening on the morning after a festivity cuts an hour or two off a day which might otherwise loom a little dull by contrast with the night before, and by law of reaction. You wake late, and by the loss of some hours a slight premium, which they need, has been put on the remaining ones.

But at four o'clock Effie already lay awake, stung into consciousness by a thought that had been hovering about her brain during her brief sleep—the thought of Clive. In the form of some strange unhappy emotion he was her bed-companion. The difference between sleep and wakefulness was only that when she woke up Clive assumed a body. In sleep he had been not much more than a name: the word "Clive" had taken shape even in dreams where words are so withheld. There had been horror in the name. "Not *Clive!* Not such a word as that!" she had thought with incredulous fear.

And she woke up to remember that he had a body too, though even for some time after she woke his body was less than his name. She woke to meet his straight long look and to see the flat sweep of his hair, which she was bound to touch in her imagination.

She lay thinking. "He and Millie practically spent the evening together—every one must have noticed that." She fiercely but sincerely exaggerated it. "Oh, if he had been to me just what he was to Millie!"

That is said briefly; it takes an hour to turn it and turn it in the brain, with slight variations.

And in that interminable dark advance of morning she was thinking at five o'clock: "I mustn't break my heart with loving him." She kept imagining her hand moving across his hair. "But that breaks my heart," she thought, and her first effort at detachment was to forbid herself that imaginary movement of her hand. So she became at war with herself. "Then I must hold his hand," she stipulated. "Well, just his hand, but only for a minute. . . . No, not so tenderly, not with such feeling. *Don't you see that breaks your heart too?*"

The bed-clothes were tossed about. Effie for a long time had thought that a new position in the bed would mean new thoughts in her brain. She was too warm now, and there was no position left that was not infinitely weary and infinitely thoughtful. It would never be light again; she gave up hoping for that; and so she must somehow find repose even in this Clive-haunted darkness.

"Now I will put the thought of him away," she said. "Whenever I think of him I will stop at once and think of something else." How impossible it was to effect this plan she soon discovered, because she was perpetually thinking of him deeply for long minutes before she realized that she was doing so. Finding this, she became more excited and hopeless. "Am I thinking about him now?" she kept asking herself in sudden wild suspicion.

Light came creeping through the window at last. One gold stocking lay on the bed and one on the floor.

II

Effie got up feeling weak and strange. She felt ill for an interminable morning, during which Clive did not come. Noon with its feeble climax of light passed by, leaving the feeling that night was the next near

thing. There was a time after lunch when the very height of despair was reached. She told her mother she was ill, and she went into the sitting-room and lay down on the rug on the floor in front of the fire. It was a rug with long hairs and was very soft to lie upon, but where the hairs touched her cheek they pricked her. She felt the fire-light flickering on her face; the leap from light to dark and dark to light jarred violently on her closed eyelids. Her nervous perception of things was so sharpened by pain in her head that to avoid these discomforts she buried her face in her arms.

And now she lay without a movement of her body, but in the firelight her dress and arms and hair leapt here and there, full of spasmodic movement, to the left and right, and up and down. It was foggy outside; the house was quiet.

To cease to move or see or hear only took her to the closer companionship of Clive—as if after meeting him with other people she had gone apart with him. It was close aching contact now. She moaned: "I can't bear this." But the very extremity of her despair gave her some hope; she knew she suffered too much to continue to do nothing about it. This was not a situation entirely closed against action.

She felt no shame as she discovered where the only alleviation lay, and determined on her action. She only felt that there was some blessedness still left in the world.

"The next time he comes I can easily see him alone," she thought, lying quite still while the firelight plucked at her and dropped her and pulled her and pushed her. "Perhaps we shall be in the sitting-room by the fire." (She pictured that spot from a distance, forgetting that she lay there.) "I shall say: 'Clive, I can't endure this suffering any longer. Clive, I love you. Just let me love you—'" There she stopped short. "Oh,

but will he come soon! That must happen soon. To-morrow I will send for him. I shall be so ill by then, and I'll say I must see him; he couldn't for any reason whatever refuse to come. So I shall have my dear to-morrow. We shall be in the sitting-room. I shall say: 'Clive, I can't endure my suffering any longer. I love you, Clive. Just let me love you—'"

She started up, without having consciously intended to do so, saw where she was, and went to the door. She met her mother, carrying in the lamp.

"I hope it's not going to get thick," Mrs. Rutherglen began, and then stopped to gaze at Effie, who looked strange and startled.

"Now, Effie, we've had enough of this foolishness," she said, "rushing about the house when you're in that state." She nearly said: "If you were my child I would send you to bed," because it was so much her habit to describe what her action would be were she not thwarted by circumstance. However, avoiding that, she said: "You will lie down on the settee, Effie, or else I shall speak to your father"—a threat in which there had always lurked some terror for Millie and Effie, even though from the time when they were tiny children they had known what a romance it all was. Their mother would lie and scheme and plot and endure rather than call out any wrath from their father, no matter on whose head.

"I will go to the settee," said Effie. "Yes, I shall be better there, because I feel so ill, mamma. We must hope it's not anything very serious. And I must see Clive to-day, so some one must go and fetch him; the boy from the cottage could be sent." (She did not know when she had changed to-morrow into to-day.) "This is very serious, mamma; don't take it to be only a little fancy—"

"He'll be over to-morrow for certain," said Mrs. Rutherglen. "It would be very strange to

send for him, dearie; it would look so—well, so strange."

"Mamma," Effie burst out, "I will go myself, and if I die on the way you will have killed me."

"Effie! You must be in a delirium or you would never speak to your own mother like that!"

"Now, mamma, don't be unhappy; you must make excuse for me. I am so ill; I have been so unhappy. And it just *happens* that there is something I must see Clive about; it might help me to be well to have a few moments' talk with him."

She suddenly realized what her words would mean; they would mean seeing him. She thrilled with desperate joy and hope and fear and courage. She pushed her mother, shyly but impatiently. "Now see to that for me. Dear me, how pretty you look! Mamma, how you do keep pretty. . . ."

III

The message brought to Effie was that he would come in an hour.

She stretched out for her watch and put it beside her in a fold of the rug on the sofa. She did not know how she would live through all those minutes, when each one alone had its patience, its impatience, its passion, its climax, and its tears. She tried to be quiet and logical; she tried calmly to congratulate herself that she had only one hour to wait, and not three or four. She thought: "If I knew I had to die in sixty minutes I should think that an exceedingly short space of time"—and then without any notice that quieting thought would merge into another: "My God, if he should be late!"

She thought that if he should be five minutes late she would scream and scream until they ran to fetch him—but of course they would not have to go far because they would meet him at the door.

She thought that if that shouldn't be, and he were ten minutes late, she would get up from her bed and go and find him, and she would meet him by the bed of white chrysanthemums in the garden in the dusk, and go straight into his arms.

But in fact when her watch marked five minutes after the time when he was due she was only lying very pale on the couch, with every muscle tense as she listened. And when ten minutes had gone she had not moved in any respect.

She heard some one come to the front door, and, after knocking, open it. Her mother came from upstairs into the hall.

"Effie's not quite the thing; we thought a little company would cheer her up," her voice said. "Though really it's a bit too bad —"

It was Clive's voice that spoke quickly: "I'm sorry. How long has she been ill? Where is she?" It was a terrible and sweet sound; Effie had stopped breathing to listen.

"I fancy she must have had a suspicion of fever in the night. Oh, it's nothing. Unfortunately, she's so excitable. However, I'm sure she's already better in herself, you know." Mrs. Rutherglen lowered her voice confidentially as she opened the sitting-room door. She raised it again immediately to speak to Effie; she had a special cheerful pitch for invalids.

"Here's our little invalid. What's the matter, pet? Aren't you quite so well, duckie?"

"Oh no, much worse," Effie replied, hardly knowing what she said. She fixed her eyes on her mother with an urgent meaning. Clive noticed that there was something almost too intense in their meaning.

"Would you like mamma to stay by you?" said Mrs. Rutherglen coaxingly, going over to stir the fire. She was curious.

But Effie said quickly: "No, mamma," without any

compromise. The mother was obliged to retire; she almost wished she had said nothing and just stayed.

Clive stood by the couch. Effie did not look up at him. He had known, ever since he came into the room, that some great emotion had hold of her; it gratified him deeply to think that this emotion was connected with himself.

"Am I a nuisance?" he asked, and as she raised her eyes now she saw the beautiful sham humble look which she loved beyond all his looks.

"I should have died if you hadn't come."

He trembled slightly with a strange excitement.

"Well, here I am, and we are going to be very happy."

"Happy?" said Effie. "Oh, if you could be me for one moment and feel what I feel!"

"Are you ill, Effie?"

"Yes, very. No, not ill. I will tell you what is the matter; will you listen?"

"I will!" he said with his enthusiasm, but he felt afraid.

She turned her face slightly towards the wall.

"I hardly feel as though I was telling you about myself. My mind feels fairly calm and cold now. It is of some creature that lives in me that I am telling you. She is a person torn with love."

He hoped and feared that it was he who was loved.

"She loves you so wildly and madly and passionately," said Effie, "that God knows what is to become of her."

From a dead silence she soon heard his voice.

"Can you speak to her, little Effie? Will you tell her to be happy, because I love her too?"

Effie waited and said: "If I tell her that, she only seems to bend her head and cry and cry."

She spoke so low that he bent nearer. In spite of

her head being turned away into the pillow and in spite of the dim light he could see her poor face.

"Why, *you* are crying," he said in a kind of dreadful surprise. He stood up again and stretched his body with a little groan as if he were in pain.

He was thinking: "For months she has been nearly crying, and now she is crying. Oh, that face of hers! It is simply unbearable that she should actually cry. How I love her! I believe this is perfect faithful love at last; until this moment I didn't know, but I know now."

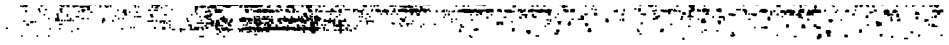
He heard some one moving in the passage outside. He said quickly: "I love you, Effie!" to the huddled figure on the couch.

"No, no, don't say that. Only tell me, Clive, if you can, how to change my heart. You see, I can't go on . . . it just isn't possible—"

"Never, never change it," said Clive. "Effie, you have made me happy. Are you happy now?" He longed to see that there were no tears on her face; he bent closer to her and closer still until suddenly in the dark he found her face with his face.

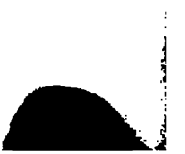
Soon Mrs. Rutherglen came in, followed by Jean carrying the tea. Effie and Clive were not again alone. Clive had to return early to a dinner-party at the Grange. Effie lay all the evening on her couch, knowing what a business it would be to convince her mother of sudden complete recovery. She felt fairly calm, and could not quite understand her terrible excitement of the last few days. She did not think of Clive. She was very full of talk.

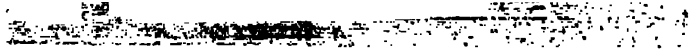
Mr. Rutherglen fidgeted during the evening, and said, as he went to bed: "Perhaps when there's no one to disturb there'll be less noise."



BOOK II

COLLISION





CHAPTER I

I

THE next day every one was gloomy and tired; there was an unusual stillness in the air, and large structural clouds were taking a heavy mysterious journey through the sky, impelled by some unearthly breezes. The idea of thunder did not occur to one; it had been raining and blowing with brief intervals for some weeks, and nature does not generally so change her voice from mild complaint to anger.

At the Rutherglens' the hall-door was left open to let in a little air; the neglected fire had fallen apart and needed reconstructing if it was to live, but not a person would stoop to trouble with it. Only Mr. Rutherglen, whose temper was unaffected by atmospheric conditions, marched heavily about in his great worn, creaking slippers, and seemed, by an increase of energy and abruptness, to despise lethargy in others.

Effie stood at the sitting-room window looking down the long flat road in a kind of dreamy abstraction, feeling strangely indifferent to everything in the world. She became weary and even a little faint with standing, for it was a day when the body resisted the least demands. She went upstairs and looked in the glass, interested to see how pale she was. It amused her to arrange her hair to suit this pallor, but arms overhead became quickly impossible. She went downstairs and soon heard some one pass through the garden. Clive came in.

"Is it a strange day?" she asked, smiling at him as he came and sat beside her—"or is it just in *me?*"

"No, it's the day," he said. "Do you know why?"

She looked at him with a look of sweet attentiveness.

"Tell me," she said.

"There will be thunder and lightning, a great storm; we shall see it together."

"I think perhaps I shall be frightened," said Effie, so simply and appealingly that it warmed his heart. She looked at one of his hands; she could hardly think of him all; she thought that precious hand could save her.

"You are better, Effie?" In one way he would not have minded hearing "no."

"Oh, yes, but of course, you see, the thunder in the air—" her head went a little on one side, and her body drooped to show her tiredness; she looked very beautiful.

Mrs. Rutherglen came in and sank on to the chair nearest the door.

"Isn't it oppressive!" she groaned. "I feel as weak as a little baby. Oh Clive, I wish I had your strength!"

"Oh then it *isn't* you who's got it?" said Clive. "Some one has."

Effie, with her tired eyes still lingering on his pale strong hand, smiled slightly. Everything that he said seemed to her very lovely.

"I think it must be going to thunder, mamma," she said, with the kind of commonplace little way of speaking which she instinctively used to her mother. She could charge her voice with commonplace.

Mrs. Rutherglen was distinctly struck by the suggestion, and dragged herself away to be a weather-prophet in her turn to her husband and Millie and Jean. Even as she left the room a shadow descended over it; she

found the passage quite dark, and had to grope her way along.

Effie got up in that heavy twilight and went to the window. There was a universal stillness and silence. The earth had grown silent and the air still, and human uprightness and balance and stability were an effort and an oppression.

In such a pause in nature as that any movement, even in the distant fields, was a kind of violation and risk. A cow wandering aimlessly up and down a hedge three fields away from the house was a most important and momentous object. Effie and Clive watched its uneasy movement from the window.

But even while the earth was in the full grasp of that stillness curious sudden things happened in the air. A tall supple tree that stood in a corner of a field was suddenly bent furiously one way. While Effie felt the air was so heavy, without being exactly warm, that even to breathe was a labour, she and Clive saw the tree suddenly strained to the south, urged to its utmost elasticity; and that seemed very strange. And then one cow raised a voice, and one sheep, only one—as if each of them knew something that the rest of their kind did not know. But the closest and most startling violation of the stillness was the quick loud bang of a door upstairs, which one of those strange partial breezes had found open. Effie started; she thought of Clive's beloved hand, and in that very instant felt it take her own. What safety and love and comfort there was in this touching of him!

It grew swiftly darker, and, without any perceptible warning flash, some thunder spoke long and quietly in the distance. That did not make Effie turn her head to look at Clive; he only saw a little sensitive move somewhere in her expression, which seemed to say to him: "Ah, I hear!"

But with hardly a moment's interval, while ear and

brain were still focused to that distant sound, there came a kind of deathly clamour overhead—a different pitch, a different voice, a different threat—not a threat, but some terrible fulfilment.

So there were two storms, one near and one far.

That new shattering noise made a dreadful strain of adjustment on the brain. The couple by the window turned in their mute uneasiness to each other. They sought each other's eyes, but that was not enough; they had to feel their heads touch gently and familiarly and warmly. They stood with their cheeks pressed together, and their eyes closed in their joy and comfort. How might those brilliant earnest eyes of hers, shut away, look now, Clive wondered; and what expression lay on her mouth? It was by her expressions that one knew her; it was like being blind not to see. He held her very closely, putting away that expression in his heart though it was a stranger.

The great clap overhead had the effect of drawing all the inmates of the house to one spot. They came into the sitting-room, each with that kind of single concentrated look which the keen exercise of any one sense produces. Their sense of hearing had been violently assaulted, and they were obliged to listen for what should come next.

Whenever the thunder pealed Mrs. Rutherglen said: "*Did you hear that?*"

"Hear what, mamma?" asked Millie with a little nervous impatient laugh. She had hurried downstairs from her room because she found it impossible to stay alone.

"Don't be so tiresome, dear," said Mrs. Rutherglen fretfully. "You know quite well what I mean."

"There was no need to let the fire out, was there?" said Mr. Rutherglen. "Annie, you'd better lie down on the couch if your head's bad."

He let his weight drop into the wicker chair by the

fireplace, and gave his attention to his newspaper. The chair creaked for a long time afterwards, as if it were adjusting its muscles to the burden.

Effie turned into the room to see about the fire, but Clive forestalled her. Mr. Rutherglen held his paper to one side to watch with tolerant good-nature Clive's performance at the fire. To Clive he often gave the tribute of amused attention.

Mrs. Rutherglen established herself on the sofa. There were occasional distant peals of thunder, at each one of which she groaned.

"We don't get the storms here that they used to get in France," said Mr. Rutherglen, addressing himself to Clive. "When I was in France twenty years ago a storm like this might be an everyday—"

The second clash from the storm overhead interrupted him. It took a good deal to talk Mr. Rutherglen down, but this thunder had the voice to do it. While the noise lasted they held their breaths; when it was over they were all conscious of the awkwardness of Mr. Rutherglen's having been interrupted. He was not accustomed to that; it did not happen; and now his wife and daughters did not feel entirely free from implication in guilt.

But Mrs. Rutherglen could only ejaculate as before: "There! Did you hear that?"

"Oh, mamma," said Millie; "I do *wish* you wouldn't!" Millie looked very pale and distraught. Successive peals of thunder came quickly now, and the lightning, as if it had changed the colour or direction of its beam, became brilliantly visible immediately before each thunder-clap. Clive blew up the indoor flame that he was tending, so that in a bright room that other might be less vivid. Effie was again at the window, looking down the long road. The shattering sounds overhead gradually abated. They had all remained very still; only Mrs. Rutherglen had kept up

her groaning, weary comment; but her exclamation in regard to one clap had often been drowned by the succeeding one. Millie had been visibly trembling, and it was only by the exercise of great control that she did not cry and scream. Clive saw how she was vulnerable where he would not have expected her to be so, and he pitied her and averted his eyes.

All this time it had not rained a drop, but suddenly a deluge fell, without a moment's prelude or warning. It was like an orchestra starting on some tremendous unheard-of crescendo.

After some minutes of rain at this exaggerated pitch it grew quieter. Then Effie's voice sounded suddenly from the window.

"Look, look!" she said excitedly, "that must be some one coming along the road!"

II

They were all grouped at the window to watch a black object that seemed to have a definite approaching movement. After a little time that object was seen to be a man, his head bent against the rain, and with a coat held as closely as possible round his body. His features were not discernible; he was distinctly below the average in height, and his body looked square and strong. As he drew near, Mr. Rutherglen and Clive went to the hall door.

"Well, I'd rather be me than him," said Mr. Rutherglen grimly, as he watched the stranger open his garden gate and walk up the path. "Well, sir," he said, raising his voice, "you've had a noisy walk."

"Is it Mr. Rutherglen?" asked the stranger, as he stepped at last into shelter.

"It is."

"I arrived last night at the inn at Redrith; I walked out here this morning to look at the diving

rocks. I met your daughter in the south, sir, and I thought I might take the liberty of calling while in the neighbourhood."

"I've got two daughters," said Mr. Rutherglen. "What's your interest in the diving-rocks? Not many come to see them at this time of the year."

"Diving's my profession," said the stranger. "I've dived in many parts of the world. I heard of a competition here, and I thought I'd have a look round."

"May I inquire your name?" said Mr. Rutherglen with some interest.

"My name's Oliver Bligh."

"I'm delighted to see you, Mr. Bligh. I hope you'll come in. I've never had the pleasure of seeing you dive, though I've got a photograph of you turning a double somersault in fifty feet at Torquay." Mr. Rutherglen gave a pleased chuckle of laughter, and nudged Clive with the arm that still held his newspaper. "Well, now, Maxwell, what do you make of this?" he asked.

"Good sport instead of bad," Clive replied with some excitement in his voice. "I'm a diver too, Mr. Bligh," he said. "My name is Clive Maxwell; you may possibly have—" he paused anxiously. But any unpleasant doubt as to his own fame was dispelled by the stranger's demeanour; he looked exceedingly surprised as he repeated the name.

"Now let's get this wet coat off," Clive said in friendly excitement. "My word, this is going to be splendid; I had no idea you would be in for the competition; I was afraid it would tail off into something local. Well, what did you think of the steps?"

The stranger had begun to look round him with uneasy expectant looks, but now he recalled his attention to Clive.

"What's that?" he said. "Oh, the steps. Yes,

famous! Anyone would think I'd had a dive with my coat on. Oh thanks. It's a bit too bad to bring in all this wet —"

When they all moved into the sitting-room Mrs. Rutherglen lay very elegantly upon the couch, and Millie, with the cessation of the thunder, had made a bright and gay recovery from her fears. Effie still looked out of the window, peering out to see the most distant fields. Mr. Rutherglen presented the stranger to his wife, and then said: "And there's Millicent," in a tone which implied: "Is this the one you know?" But Mr. Bligh, bowing to Millicent, said: "Not that one," and looked to the window.

"Euphemia!" said her father sharply, but Effie had already begun to turn round, smiling a little, expectant. "Mr. Bligh," her father reminded her, "who knew you in—in Croydon, I suppose?" he asked Mr. Bligh.

"Yes, in Croydon."

"Oh, it is possible," said Effie. She stopped to breathe, and said: "I don't remember. Where did you say?"

But the stranger had turned to the fire, and stooped to warm his hands.

"Something more radical than that," said Clive, "ought to be done. I suggest that nothing short of a change of clothes—"

"That's right," laughed Mr. Rutherglen; "you look after him! That's the spirit! But don't you trust him, Mr. Bligh. You step upstairs with me, and we'll see what we can do. Did you say you were stopping at Redrith?"

"Yes, at the inn."

"Well, I'd as soon live in one of my kennels. Why not shift over here? We should be proud to entertain you."

"Yes," said Mrs. Rutherglen with a charming languid smile, "do give us the pleasure."

"You're very kind," said Mr. Bligh. "I really don't think I could; I should feel I was intruding."

"Not at all, sir; nothing of the kind," said Mr. Rutherglen. "Fetch your things over and come along and stay here until you can settle somewhere better. I suppose you'll be in the neighbourhood until the competition?"

Mr. Bligh was still demurring when Effie spoke strangely from her place in the background.

"*Father!*" she said in a voice of consternation and as if the force of what she had to say was bound to impress him, "do you realize—the competition is not until the beginning of July, and this is only January!"

Every one stared at her; it seemed an uncalled-for interference. But on her face they could only see one of her tremendous expressions—a kind of stupid absorption in the logic of what she had pointed out. She was not yet conscious of the strangeness of her interference; she only continued, by her expression of surprise and protest and reasoning, to make herself conspicuous and wondered at.

"Hold your tongue, Euphemia!" said her father, and suddenly a look of acute consciousness and shame dawned in her face.

Mr. Rutherglen conducted the guest upstairs. After a few moments Effie got up and went away. So that no one should speak to her or hinder her she jumped up and went suddenly, as if she had just remembered something. She was beginning to mount the stairs when she heard the sitting-room door open again, and Clive came out.

"Do you think I can help your father?"

"Oh no, they can manage."

"What's the matter, Effie?"

Her body, which looked sometimes big and some-

times little, was pressed thinly now against the wall. She had on a narrow black dress. She looked aggressively pathetic.

"Only an awful headache."

"Go and lie down, you poor child."

"Yes, I shall really have to."

"And sleep, my little suffering bird."

"Oh yes."

"And when shall I see you?"

"Let's see," she said, with a kind of false air of calculation. "Soon, I hope, you will come again."

She was so unlike herself; he looked at her doubtfully. He always found it hard to figure other people's pain; his sympathy had to be a kind, gracious pretence; but now he wished uneasily that Effie might be spared pain. He made her promise to take asperin. "Or," he said, a little doubtful, "Effie, it isn't still about me?" he whispered, a little shy. The change in his voice and the protesting tender look in his face were full of his extraordinary attraction. "Because, you know," he said, smiling and shaking his head at her as if to contradict her, "if it is *that* —"

"Oh, *no*," she said.

Soon his voice could be heard in conversation with Mr. Bligh in the bath-room. The house seemed to resound with Clive's gladness. It was as if there had been a double advent—the first, Mr. Bligh; and the second, not a bit less important, Clive's gladness that he had come.

III

Some time after, Effie came down again to the sitting-room. Her father and Mr. Bligh were sitting one on each side of the fire; a little table was drawn up between them, and on it lay Mr. Rutherglen's collection of sporting prints. Millie, with some sewing, sat

near. Mr. Bligh, solicitously anxious to include her, had passed one of the drawings on to her, which she took with a pretty air of gratitude. Mr. Rutherglen had remarked: "Please don't trouble, Mr. Bligh. My daughters don't really take the slightest interest." Mrs. Rutherglen was in the kitchen, hastily making such additions to the forthcoming meal as would have the appearance of the essential refinements of every day. Clive had long gone home.

Effie came into the sitting-room with an air of almost jaunty confidence in her own charm—very unlike what she had been an hour or two ago. She caught the eye of Mr. Bligh with a little conscious side-long look, which made him gaze and kindle and give only incoherent attention to Mr. Rutherglen. She was full of words and laughter and gestures.

"Oh dear, when ever is lunch!" she cried. "That thunderstorm was such a hard morning's work; I'm starving after it. Where's mamma?" she asked Millicent, who merely shrugged her shoulders. "You know," said Effie, turning to Oliver Bligh, "it's your fault lunch is late. If mamma considers you only rather important it will be half an hour late, but if you are very important it will be quite an hour late. Aren't you curious to see how you stand?"

"That'll do," said Mr. Rutherglen.

Effie reddened, and glanced furtively at Oliver to see if he thought any the less of her for her father's curt rebuke. It would be most cruel to her, just now, not to feel herself greatly admired. She was silent for a little while, though she walked restlessly about the room—a most conspicuous figure, with bright cheeks and brilliant shining eyes. She stretched out her arms, and then drew them tensely in again.

"Oh, one should sleep for a hundred hours!" she said. "Really, I don't know when I have done such

a day's work. The thunder must have borrowed my muscles to do things with, and has returned them in a very poor condition. I hope they *are* mine. Mamma once sent some wonderful feathers to the cleaners, and—" she began to laugh rather immoderately—"Millie, do you *remember* mamma's face when she undid that box!

"Oh dear, I wonder where the poor old cow is," she said at the window. "She was looking for something in the hedge; she couldn't find it—probably something to throw at the thunder. I can't see her now. Perhaps the thunder threw something at *her*. No more milk for the Rutherglens! Here is mamma at last. Is lunch ready, mamma?" She glanced at her watch and laughed. "Just three-quarters of an hour late." She looked at Mr. Bligh. "I think you should take that to be satisfactory."

Mr. Bligh replied to her with a rather nervous smile; Mr. Rutherglen's thoughts were now entirely concentrated on his frustrated appetite, and so Effie escaped the rebuke from him which she had certainly challenged by her assertiveness. The distracted hostess, who thought it very stupid of Effie to refer to the lateness of the meal, gave her a meaning look, and Effie laughed again, and said: "Sorry, mamma."

Lunch went off very cheerfully. It was still overcast and raining outside, and a lamp was lit on the lunch table, and seemed to make the occasion unusual and festive. The food was very good. Millie always ate with a daintily selective appetite; Effie, to-day, ate hungrily and eagerly, eyeing what was to come, and passing up her plate for more. Mr. Rutherglen had only needed food to make him again expansive and delighted with his guest.

"Annie, fetch us a little of the juice of the grape, my dear," he said in his warmest tones.

The guest was not a difficult one; he conversed with

Mr. Rutherglen about his achievements in various parts of the world. There was something about him which was if not unrefined at least insignificant. He had small, unimportant, but good features; there was a good deal of kindness in his eye; one could imagine him being too easily kind to women.

He had a tale to tell of some injustice which had befallen him in a diving competition in the south of France. His resentment lifted his eyebrows. He paused in the middle to turn apologetically to Effie; "You've heard all this before, of course"—but Effie only looked up from her enjoyment of her food to face him with heavy sullen unresponsiveness, and he proceeded.

"Those French dogs will do anything," said Mr. Rutherglen. "I ought to know them; I've lived in France myself. I superintended racing-stables there for two years."

"I found it pretty dull over there," said Mr. Bligh; "I never picked up the language. I suppose being there two years you were able to get their lingo."

"No," said Mr. Rutherglen contemptuously, "not I. I wouldn't encourage it. Let them get other people to talk to them—they won't get me."

In the friendly glow of lamplight and firelight, and in the spirit of warm satisfaction promoted by the wine and coffee and cigarettes, Mr. Rutherglen again pressed Mr. Bligh to take up his abode with them for the present. He yielded, and it was arranged that he should go back to the hotel for one night, and return with his luggage.

After lunch there was a little temporary brightness in the sky, which must soon again vanish—not for storm this time, but for evening. Effie was still conspicuous in her good spirits when the little company returned to the sitting-room, and sat without a lamp in the fitful brightness of the early winter sunset, which

made a red and gold break low in the cold grey sky. Effie in her talk darted here and there, sometimes foolish and irrelevant, sometimes raising a little involuntary laugh in the others, always very ready with laughter herself. Her father, strangely indulgent, let her talk.

CHAPTER II

I

Mr. Bligh would not stay for a cup of tea at Mrs. Rutherglen's suggestion, nor would he stay for Mr. Rutherglen's more confidential proposal of a stronger drink in the study. Effie, in the midst of her restless walking about the room, passed by the window soon after he had gone. She saw him standing in the road, looking back at the window. Her heart leapt with fear and horror as she saw that figure there in the dusk. When she appeared at the window he lifted his arm to her in a kind of impotent gesture of love and farewell, but she, never pausing in her walk, passed on.

"The competition ought to be enormous fun," she said as she walked back into the room. "I should think we will have a party, mamma. But it's a long way off. Let's do something exciting now. Millie, won't you ask that girl you liked at school to come and stay with us?"

"Oh, and where would she sleep?" Millie asked coldly. "Do you suggest the spare room? Because I don't think it's fit to sleep in. Besides, Mr. Bligh will be there."

"Annie," said Mr. Rutherglen from his chair, where he was leaning back comfortably with his eyes closed, "you'll catch the post to the butcher this afternoon."

"Yes, dear . . . I was just going to," she added, to put a false cheerful finish to her complaisance.

"She could sleep with you, Millie," said Effie, longing to arrange this.

"Thank you, but I prefer to have my room to myself."

Effie had never seen this girl, but she felt most bitterly disappointed.

"Mamma," she said, "I shall be going into Redrith to-morrow so I could do the butcher for you." She had suddenly decided to go there to order herself a new dress.

"Let your mother write," said Mr. Rutherglen, still with his eyes closed. "They'll give her more attention."

Mrs. Rutherglen had gone to the bureau, and with her head very much on one side was writing to the butcher with many a dash and flourish, and taking great pains with her capitals.

"I will look beautiful in that dress," Effie was thinking. "Rich blue makes my face shine. We must have a party; they don't seem to care; how *can* they not care!" Aloud she said: "Surely we will have a party soon, mamma. This room would hold ——."

"Annie," said Mr. Rutherglen, "one of the girls had better turn out for Mr. Bligh."

"Yes, dear."

The two girls glanced at each other, for each to gauge the other's opposition. Millie looked very cool, Effie passionately unwilling and resentful. Millie loved to manage a difficult situation with the minimum of effort: she would often risk a failure in her liking to draw her effort very fine. She liked to accomplish things silently, perhaps just with a look, perhaps even by her mere negation of expression. But now she had to remark casually: "The spring of my bed is broken, so I suppose that would hardly do."

"Well, then, it will have to be you, Effie," said Mrs. Rutherglen. "After all," she added reasonably, "you are the youngest, aren't you, dear?"

Effie could only stare at her, speechless, with nothing to say.

She thought soon again of the party, and of her dress, which would be rich and beautiful. As for money, the world was mad if it thought that could come into any grave reckoning with life. If she could get one moment's peace of mind or pleasure out of this dress, whatever it might cost, it was not likely that she would hold back on account of foolish scruples, probably invented by people who had never suffered.

Effie was lying sideways in an armchair, her legs thrown over the leathern arm. A flame that had been flickering uncertainly in the fire suddenly went quite out. Effie noticed with great apprehension how dark the day had become. She thought that darkness was one of the most cruel things in the world, which came along and put a horrible check on people just when they were managing to be reasonably happy and excited. Feeling movement was necessary, she again got up and went to the window. Yes, the earth was dark, but there was still a pale brightness in the west. Effie looked at the colourless sky with its mild radiance, and knew that little stars would soon begin to show there where it was clear; she turned away sick at heart; she felt she could not bear it.

"Hush!" said Mrs. Rutherglen as she moved; "papa's gone to sleep."

Effie stood, wavering. She thought she would go up to her room; but as she imagined it, with the uncertain light glimmering on the white bed, and the corners dark, and the cold solitude of it, she shivered inwardly, and stayed near companionship and warmth. She took up the same position as before because she

could swing her legs. She swung them aggressively; they tapped against the chair. She did not want the others to think that this was a quiet dusk hour when every one might have a little nap until tea; on no account must her mother and Millie, like her father, go to sleep. This was really important. She must not be the only one left awake. She cast sharp glances at the others, and hoped that it was near tea-time.

She could have managed to live, she thought, if she could have had plenty of excitement and incident, but how was a girl to live in this kind of darkness and quiet and sterility? — a girl who must never for one single instant *think*? She felt in her throat the pain of unallowed tears; she kept her dark anxious eyes on her mother and Millie. Mrs. Rutherglen left the writing-table and went on tip-toe to the sofa, where she lay down. Millie had been using the very last of the light to read by. Now she put the book lazily down, and, without shifting her position, but just letting her head drop against the side of the chair, she closed her eyes.

Effie said quickly: "What's the time, Millie?"

She did not answer.

Effie turned with something like panic in her eyes to her mother. She saw her wriggling herself into comfort, and then her eyes closed, too.

There came a hard, unnatural cough from Effie. Mrs. Rutherglen gave a slight start, and her heavy eyes began to travel exploringly towards where Effie sat; but they became shut away again in sleep on the way, when they had only got about as far as the framed photograph of Mr. Rutherglen's father hanging on the wall.

This was a photograph of a very uncompromising looking gentleman; it was signed "Jno.' Jas. Rutherglen."

II

An hour later, when the lamp was lit and they were having tea, Mr. Rutherglen said to Effie, without looking at her: "Well, you're quiet enough now; I suppose your tongue's tired." She gave him a sombre look from under her eyebrows, and was dumb. When her mother and Millie went away she watched the opening and the closing of the door as if she was watching the impending knife of a surgeon.

When she went to find her mother Mrs. Rutherglen was humming a little tune as she probed about in her wardrobe by the light of a single candle. With a visitor actually staying in the house the problem of dress was going to be rather acute. She was the kind of woman who at a certain time in the day or for certain people makes herself conspicuously resplendent, but who has her slack, her very slack, hours. But now from morning to night a certain tone would have to be maintained. That was a prospect which had its anxiety as well as its gratification.

"Mamma," said Effie, coming in a little breathless, "listen, mamma. Will you listen and help me?"

"I'm always helping you," said Mrs. Rutherglen a little fretfully. "What's the matter? Only yesterday I sent for Clive at some inconvenience, and — well, what is it now?"

"That's one thing, mamma," said Effie bitterly; "you said *always;* won't you make a list?" She then had a horror that this would tail off into a mere foolish angry argument. She said: "No, no, never mind," while her mother laid out an evening dress carefully on a chair. Its sleeves were stuffed with pink tissue-paper; there was a smell of camphor in the room.

"Are you ill, dear?" she asked abstractedly.

"No, I was thinking just now in the sitting-room

how one of the teachers at the school said to me once: 'Oh, you are lucky to have a mother! What it must be in any trouble —!' I remember she said just that."

Mrs. Rutherglen, bewildered, took her cue from this very proper sentiment.

"What is it, dearie? You'd better tell me. Some poor girls haven't got anyone to go to. Why, a lot of girls have lost their mothers when they were no more than little babies."

"I know we have never really been anything to each other," said Effie, too genuinely needy to be buoyed up by false sentiment; "I mean, not like some mothers and daughters. But surely, surely — *now* — "

"Is there anything bad?" asked Mrs. Rutherglen.

"It's a confession — yes, bad."

"Effie," said Mrs. Rutherglen, in sudden fear, "have you done anything that will make your father angry?"

"Will he be dreadfully angry?" said Effie, turning white. "Well, if he is I shall just have to bear it."

"And there's my own feelings too, after all," said Mrs. Rutherglen. "You'll never know all that I've borne for you."

"Oh, mamma, but this is now, and real! How can I say —? Well, listen, mamma, I'd better be dead."

"Whatever is it, dear?"

Effie painfully blurted out her speech. Afterwards she lived the moments over again in her mind, and then she told it with great dignity and tragedy. But now in her hurried bald statement she felt the essence of all shame.

"Oliver — Oliver, I mean, who was here to-day — he — I was going to say he is my husband; but I am not exactly married to him; I would have been, but his wife was living then in an asylum. He was to come here when she died. And now he's come. Do

you understand feeling, mamma? — because I wish he had come here to kill me."

"You can't be speaking the truth!"

"I am. You won't have him in the house?"

"Do you realize what you have told me?"

"Yes, yes, but oh, my God, if I could undo it —"

"How dare you, how dare you!" said Mrs. Rutherglen in a kind of incoherent whisper. "How did you dare come home here and not die of shame! You're a bad girl; you make me positively afraid of you. I don't deserve to have such shame, considering that I've always been good and self-sacrificing myself."

A quick, faint look of peace stole over Effie's face. Her face so quickly expressed her. This tremendous righteous indignation soothed her heart; she felt that she was in the presence of something strong and powerful, something that would lead and act. The world no longer consisted just of herself and her own despair. There were other forces, thank God. She had drawn her mother in, and what she felt now was joy compared to the horror of them all asleep.

"I'm sorry, mamma; I will never, never hurt you again. Is it terribly hard for you? But I'm glad I told you."

"Don't you love him now?"

"No," said Effie, doubt and wonder on her face. "It's not love. . . ."

"It's a bit too hard," said Mrs. Rutherglen in a kind of bitter soliloquy. "You go along carefully and never indulge yourself, and then your own daughter comes and heaps just as much shame on you as if you'd enjoyed every kind of wickedness yourself."

"What will you do? What will father do?" Effie was standing in a huddled attitude, and she looked cold and lifeless. With a sudden quick return of despair she began to shiver violently.

"I'm not strong enough for this kind of thing," said Mrs. Rutherglen, breathing uncomfortably. She cast her eyes round, looking for respite for her troubled nerves. The candle stood on the chest-of-drawers, and just near lay her pale silk dress. It seemed to absorb the whole light of the candle, so that it looked very delicate and gay in the sombre room. She imagined herself arrayed in it to-morrow evening for the benefit of the guest. "I don't see why we shouldn't occasionally dress for dinner," she thought. Then she remembered quickly with an unpleasant sensation that it was with this very guest that the disgraceful trouble was connected. She had a great longing to make things as like as possible to what they had been before Effie came into her bedroom.

She turned to Effie, feeling exhausted.

"You'll have to promise one thing, Effie, that you'll have nothing whatever to do with him while he's here in the house."

"In the house, mamma? But he won't be in the house."

Mrs. Rutherglen turned her head wearily to one side.

"Are you going to marry him or not?"

"I don't know; how can I say? I don't know."

"You'll have to make up your mind," said Mrs. Rutherglen, with her slightly difficult breath. "His being here won't hinder you from doing that; it'll help, I should say. Besides, what should I give to your father for a reason for not having him?"

"Won't father know?" asked Effie, with a kind of cruel disappointment.

"Not while I'm alive," said Mrs. Rutherglen.

A cart stopped outside, and the bell rang; it was the day and hour for a tradesman's call. Mrs. Ruther-

glen was relieved to hear these sounds, but she up slowly and went rather uneasily towards the door, a little ashamed of leaving Effie to go to what she enjoyed. Just as she was gaining confidence through having crossed the threshold, and as she began to increase her speed, as a dog, stealing away to some forbidden spot, quickens his pace when he thinks he has safely evaded notice, she heard Effie's voice:

"But, mamma, you haven't *helped* me!"

Mrs. Rutherglen started rather guiltily and turned back. She held out her arms in sudden pity to that desolate huddled figure, and Effie went into them. She sobbed violently and terribly, trying to speak: "I'm not worthy —" her mother just heard. When Effie stopped sobbing, and cast off her dreadful humility, she saw with great sadness and wonder that there were tears running down her mother's face.

"I will try to forgive you, Effie," Mrs. Rutherglen said. "I dare say some mothers never would."

"There, there, mamma," Effie said, comforting her. "There now, trot down, dearie."

Left alone, Effie stood quite still in the room, her hands icy, her knees weak, staring first at her mother's pillow, and then, without moving her eyes, seeing only the space between herself and the pillow.

The only single gleam of comfort had been the moment of greatest indignation; where was that indignation now? Melted away to vague tears and weak embraces and easy, terrible forgiveness.

Shivering, she hurried down to the sitting-room and saw with satisfaction that Millie was sitting there by a good fire, her hair carefully arranged, her delicate hands hovering like butterflies over some fine elaborate lace that she was making. Effie said, unnecessarily:

"Oh, you are there, Millie!" Millie would not even show any surprise at so uncalled-for and unusual a remark. Effie took a book and sat down on the other side of the fire. As she turned a page it rattled noisily in her hand.

CHAPTER III

I

Mrs. Rutherglen composed herself and went down to the backdoor, which already stood open. There was a covered tradesman's cart waiting there, with an oil-lamp burning inside it; and arranged neatly and attractively on shelves round the inside of the cart there were about a thousand articles proper and improper to the grocer's trade. All these things — brightly-labelled bottles and packets and tins — were kept in place by means of a little wire cage, which put a check on the mad dancing there would otherwise have been in there when the cart was going.

Mr. Joynson had come himself; generally he sent an emissary. Mrs. Rutherglen keenly appreciated his visits, and when she stepped outside and saw him there it seemed to her very hard that Effie should have come to her with that dreadful news just to-day, leaving her without any spirit to enjoy this pleasant occasion. She had no heart to enjoy anything now. She considered Mr. Joynson to be a man of extraordinary attractions, but all that could mean nothing to her with such a trouble on her mind. She looked up at him plaintively, her blue eyes a little dimmed by her recent tears. It did just cross her mind that she must appear beautiful in distress.

"You've been upset by the storm, Mrs. Rutherglen," said Mr. Joynson with his thrilling decisiveness. "So was Lady Brownley up at the Hall at Spurtwell. Her

ladyship didn't look herself, neither do you; highly-strung delicate ladies can't stand that sort of thing."

"It does so upset the — *nerves*," said Mrs. Rutherglen,—"at least, that's where *I* feel it."

She looked into the cart. "Stationery, too, Mr. Joynson? Well, I really think you're wonderful the way you always seem to know what one wants. I bought a quantity of envelopes at the station bookstall not long ago. I've had such trouble with them through their not sticking, but they're nearly finished at last. It's true they were very cheap; I only gave twopence the packet."

"Do you say *cheap*, Mrs. Rutherglen? You must mean very dear."

"Twopence the packet? Would you call that dear? Well, I suppose things do get wonderfully cheap nowadays."

Mr. Joynson smiled. When he smiled his black waxed moustache travelled perceptibly east and west.

"Would envelopes that didn't stick be cheap at *any* price?" he asked in a voice full of meaning.

"Oh I *see*," said Mrs. Rutherglen. "Looking at it in *that* way — oh yes, I see —"

"Ah, you take my point," said Mr. Joynson.

"Well, perhaps you will let me have some envelopes this afternoon," she said. "Say half a dozen packets. Just to see. And what can you recommend me in the way of a good cake? We're rather tired of the School Cakes."

"Of course you're tired of them. What you want now is something more fanciful, something that eats more delicately altogether. If you hadn't mentioned it I should have made the suggestion myself. Sometimes ladies are so patient and so unselfish — they want someone to act for them. Sometimes even their husbands don't see it like that, but there it is. I've got something here to recommend to you. Now I don't

pretend this is a gentleman's cake. I'm leaving Mr. Rutherglen out of the question for the moment; I'm simply considering a lady's fancy. You'll find it tempts you in your present state, Mrs. Rutherglen."

"It's quite true that my husband and I often don't like the same things," said Mrs. Rutherglen, vaguely but intensely pleased.

"Now what I'm offering you is a more expensive cake than what you've been having. It's all to my advantage that you should take the more expensive article, you know, Mrs. Rutherglen. Please understand that. It all goes to make more profit for me." His mere mention of his profits in some way discountenanced them, in fact made them do him infinite credit.

"I'm sure I wish we saw you oftener, Mr. Joynson, but of course you're busy." After another twenty minutes or so Mrs. Rutherglen said good-night and went indoors. There is no question but that she had been infinitely distracted and consoled.

II

Late that night Mrs. Rutherglen lay awake in bed. She had woken up suddenly with a little pang of horror which she knew immediately referred to Effie. But the horror vanished or was merged in other considerations as soon as she was thoroughly awake. She lay thinking with mixed uneasiness and wonder, piecing together an imaginary version of what had happened in the past. Her mind was extraordinarily divided between pain and almost envy. Soon she stopped thinking to listen.

She crept out of bed and went to the door and opened it and listened again. The noise she heard sounded louder as soon as she opened the door; it was

fitful but clear and unmistakable. Mrs. Rutherglen did not wake her husband. In their very early married life she used to wake him if she did not feel well. He never reproached her. But once she woke him for some inadequate reason, and his resentment then was so immediate and severe that it had the effect of altogether putting an end to her waking him for any reason at all.

She went across the passage to Millie's room, and woke her, saying: "There must be something wrong with Effie, there's such a strange noise from her room. Come with me, Millie, quickly."

She did not leave the room until Millie was well beside her; they even held hands as they went down the passage, not to encourage or befriend each other, but to make a stronger front against an enemy.

"What can it be?" whispered Millie, as she too heard. "Come back, mamma, for a candle."

They set out again with the candle. As they opened Effie's door the flame strained low and small in the draught. They could not see anything, but they heard Effie crying horribly.

They stood for a few moments listening, afraid. The sounds were slightly unnatural, and should have been interrupted, surely, by their coming. The candle-flame was straight and full again; Effie lay on the bed. They both instinctively looked round the room, with a nameless expectation. No one was there, nothing contributed to the single horror of the sound she was making. While they listened it stopped for a few seconds and they thought she had come to a sense of their presence and would speak to them, but instead it began again.

When it began again Mrs. Rutherglen could stand it no longer.

"Be *quiet*, Effie!" she said in an angry whisper.

Effie seemed to pause to listen, but only for a moment.

Mrs. Rutherglen went up to the bed, taking Millie with her.

"How can you cry so, like a child! As if it will do any good! Effie! Do you hear me speaking to you? Millie, why doesn't she answer? I'll wake her father. — I'll wake your father; *now* will you answer me?"

"Be quiet, mamma," said Millie a little breathlessly. "Can't you see that she's asleep?"

Mrs. Rutherglen was excited by fear, and she took hold of Effie's shoulder and shook her. Effie woke up and looked in great surprise at the figures by her bed. As she woke up she became as it were sleepy, and said in a sleepy voice: "Is it late?"

"You were crying," said Mrs. Rutherglen, looking at her curiously.

"Crying, mamma? I've only this moment woken up," Effie contradicted.

"I heard you right in my room," said her mother, still with a kind of breathless indignation; "you woke me."

"Mamma, really, you must have been dreaming. Is it nearly time to get up? Let's get up early and make some scones for breakfast. Do let's." She looked at her watch by her bed. "*Mamma!* It's not two o'clock! You surely haven't had the heart to wake me. . . . To-night! Oh, how could you? And now I suppose you'll go away, back to sleep, and leave me. . . ."

"Of course I had to wake you," said Mrs. Rutherglen; "you were crying out loud."

"I was asleep, mamma," said Effie in a loud threatening voice. They knew what she was, sometimes, in argument, loud and bitter and certain, provoking dis-

like of herself. It had always been almost a joy to prove her wrong when she was in that mood.

"Look at your pillow," said Millie.

She did look, and it was wet. Tears began to flow down her face as she looked and fell where other tears had fallen.

These new tears fell so quickly and easily, not like difficult first-born things, that she was persuaded that she had cried while she slept. She was quite silenced.

"Don't cry any more, dearie," said her mother; "it doesn't do any good."

"I want to get up," said Effie brokenly; "I don't want to be in bed."

"But getting up doesn't make the day come any sooner," said Millie, for comfort.

"Well, you'll only get cold," said Effie. She lay down and pulled the clothes over her; she even closed her eyes, like a person who only needed to give the slightest encouragement to sleep.

"I'm sorry I woke you," she said in one of her fits of humility.

"No, dearie," said Mrs. Rutherglen gently; "you couldn't help yourself."

Millie said: "I will stay with you if you like?"

Effie shook her head, still with her eyes closed in her exaggerated pretence of approaching sleep.

"Are you sure?" asked Millie.

When they had closed the door quietly Effie began to cry again, in a way dishonestly, making the sounds just loud enough so that they might possibly hear and be brought back, and then stopping in a little frightened panic lest they had heard and were coming. Tiring of that, she stopped suddenly to think of something.

III

It had struck her how like Millie was in many ways to their father. It suddenly seemed to explain Millie, though it was strange, perhaps, that she should resemble what she so feared. Little points of likeness came flowing in on Effie's remembrance; and they were so obvious now that they seemed like things she must have once known and had merely forgotten for a while.

Mr. Rutherglen never troubled to raise his voice for anyone's convenience. He sometimes spoke from his study to his family in the adjoining sitting-room, but always in his ordinary tone, and someone had to hurry to his door to hear. Sometimes when he was sitting with them he broke in upon their conversation, not loudly so as to drown their voices, but very quietly on the contrary, winning by sheer power of his tyranny, so that they stopped short almost breathlessly to hear. Millie, in certain moods, answered her mother and Effie in a cold mumble of words, which they would be obliged to ask her to repeat. By an irritated tired pause before she repeated herself, and by an exaggerated loudness and clearness the second time, she had an uncomfortable way of making one feel one was a nuisance and importunate.

From both her father and Millie Effie got an impression of extraordinary worldliness — not worldliness quite in the ordinary sense, but one felt that they saw their little scorns and triumphs and advantages as big as God. One single moment, if it was going to decide some insignificant triumph or failure, could so easily blot out the whole of eternity. So do all people lose sight of it in moments; but with them one felt in their very suppression how much their whole being was interested and involved every particle of them. With most people one generally feels some kind

of reserve; there is at least an implied consciousness of a past and a future.

Yes, and then they were both the same with dogs. They loved them, but their way of loving was to be almost cruel, and jealous and exacting.

CHAPTER IV

I

THE next day Effie started out early, sitting up beside the postman in his little narrow cart. It was a bleak raw morning with hoar on the grass, and a cold mist hanging over the mountain. Effie sat huddled up, looking cold enough, with blue shadows under her eyes. When after an hour's driving they got to town she parted with the postman on friendly, almost romantic, terms, and made her way to the milliner's shop to order her dress. Though she could not afford it she did not for a moment hesitate; she was only conscious of feeling righteous and just, as she bought the beautiful expensive stuff, and went up a little narrow staircase—built for domesticity, and only adapted for commerce—with a lady in a tight-fitting black dress to be measured.

The lady in the black dress (which showed the kind of thing the firm could turn out) had a persuasive tongue, and Effie ended by ordering two dresses, still with her sad, quiet righteousness. Her next thought was that if she was going to lie awake again to-night it might be a little comfort to have a soft india-rubber hot-water bottle, which she could put under her back where she shivered, instead of being at the mercy of a hard one, which is rather like an enemy conferring benefits. The lady in the tight dress said that would be in the drugs.

The young man in the drugs thought her beautiful;

she could see that. Being rather exaggeratedly excited about her new dress, and impatient for it, she felt a vague wonder that she should be so admired without it.

This young man had only lately been considering that even to have secured a situation in so fine an establishment—in fact, the largest in the town—did not satisfy every wish of a man's heart, whatever you might say. He had begun to have strong suspicions in regard to romance, that it was something more wonderful than the shop and the territorials and the Redrith debating union all thrown together — which is to say something. Effie, coming in early in the morning, with all her beauty and something of vague fear and seeking in her eyes, made his heart suddenly tumultuous under a meek exterior. The only effect on his manner was that it became more perfectly unnatural.

"Fave and nane," he said in answer to Effie. "Or we have them at a more moderate price if you should prefer."

"I don't much mind really about the *price*," said Effie. Her heart expanded a little in a love of platitudes. "It's never a saving in the end," she remarked. "I just want something that's not too big and not too little." With his help she chose one.

"Care should be taken not to fill with boiling water," said the young man. "Sometimes a careless servant ——"

"They *are* so careless, aren't they!" said Effie.

The young man laughed mirthlessly in the joy of agreement.

"And they won't learn," he said. "I'm sure one of our customers complains that the maids ruin one bottle after another in spite of all she can say."

"I know; it's awful. And you can't do more than tell them, can you?"

They were both satisfied with the extraordinary appropriateness and almost intelligence of what they were

saying, though they could both have said better things.

"I seem to have mislaid my book," he said, hurriedly lifting up the things upon the counter. "Very careless; and I dare say you're in a hurry. It's always the way; if you want a thing in a hurry ——"

"It's never there," Effie broke in, her voice interested and charged with commonplace. "Whereas if you don't want it ——"

"Oh, then of course it's in the way," he said, as it were, wittily.

When Effie left the shop, feeling conforted but not dwelling on the comfort in case it should become unreal, Miss E. Rutherglen, on the other hand, was noted down in the firm's order-books as being twice their debtor — once in a bold black handwriting that made its u's like n's, and once in nervous inadequate letters which had subsequently been gone over carefully and firmly, in order, no doubt, to conform to the high standard of caligraphy which the firm always maintained among its assistants.

Then Effie, who had meant to find further pleasure and distraction in the town, because she felt afraid of home and Clive, had a sudden impulse to hurry home because Clive might be there waiting for her; all at once it seemed terrible to be so far away. So she began to walk out of the town at a tremendous pace, the kind of pace one would use for a mile journey.

The town was very difficult to discard; there were pretentious little villas cropping up endlessly along the road; they generally had their woodwork painted vermilion and a little blue glass introduced into the lower window-panes; Clive had once pretended to be shocked in his patriotism by her abuse of these homes of England. Altogether it took her nearly three hours to walk the nine miles, so soon and completely did her pace degenerate through fatigue. All the way she had

the nervous strain of thinking that this was perhaps a losing race to catch Clive.

Reaching home at last, she found one room after another empty. It was three o'clock; Mrs. Rutherglen would be sleeping in her room, Millie out, Jean changing her dress, Mr. Rutherglen at the Grange. Effie climbed slowly upstairs; she tried to soothe her aching disappointment by thinking that she was in such a tired state that it was better after all that Clive was not there. "I shouldn't really have been able to talk to him," she thought. "What would be the use of letting him see how heavy and tired I can get, without a thought in my head — a dead weight on a man like him!" She would lie on her bed and rest, and Clive might come later.

She was astonished to find Jean in her room; it seemed such an unlikely hour for a servant of conventional habits to be turning out a room. Effie saw that the room looked emptier than usual, though she did not know what she missed. On the bed and toilet-table and towel-rail the linen was very stiff and white.

Jean's hard old face was turned to her for a moment.

"You'll have to make your own bed, Miss Effie," she said crossly.

"It is made," said Effie.

"Oh, who made it then?"

"I don't know. Not you?"

"*That* isn't your bed," said Jean, understanding. A little gleam of satisfaction came into her face as she realized that some one else had just as much reason to be put out as she had. "No, this is his lordship's room, the one that was here yesterday. You, of course, can sleep anywhere—being only a delicate girl anywhere will do for you." It was no real sympathy that dictated this speech; it was only Jean's mis-

chievous wish to extend her own grievance into another breast.

"Yes, of course they don't think that I shan't sleep a wink," said Effie, angrily. "That's the last thing to think about." She then felt humiliated by this partnership with Jean. "Has Mr. Maxwell been?" she asked.

"Yes, he was over about twelve; he didn't stay."

"Was there any message?"

"None that I heard of."

Effie went away. There was a tiny passage about seven feet in length, leading to her new adjoining room. The door of the room was very low, lower than Effie's height; the passage sloped considerably down, as if luring one to a doom of bruised head. It was an oddly-shaped little room, a mere space left over between the shapes of other rooms and chimneys and passages. There were boxes in it, and a great rolled-up carpet sprawled down one corner of the wall from the ceiling to the floor and well out into the room, for neither height nor width could accommodate it alone. In another corner of the room an old suit of clothes of Mr. Rutherglen's hung on a nail; the sleeve that hung out was slightly bent, rounded on the outside of the elbow and creased on the inside, as if the arm were still inside it.

On the unmade bed lay a heap of Effie's clothes, and her brushes and slippers and sponge. She pushed those things to one end and lay down. Her head was close up against the wall of her old room. She heard Jean's tremendous footsteps in there; and something fell. She thought: "How that woman must be stamping about! I wonder what she dropped—I hope not my old looking-glass. She must simply be throwing things about to be heard so plainly in here."

Effie tried to make the room more comfortable; she stayed in it until she heard her mother moving about

the house. She had a simple plan which pleased her. She would never be downstairs alone, so that Oliver Bligh would have no opportunity of talking to her. She would keep that up, very innocently, for days and days and days—one of those very simple plans that can yet be so effective. She really thought she could manage it.

II

Mr. Rutherglen passed his guests some cigars with a manner that recommended them in confidence as from man to man. Mr. Adams and Mr. Bligh were sitting at the table with empty places between them. Mrs. Rutherglen and the girls had retired, the hostess remarking with a kind of sprightly tact: "Now we know perfectly well that you're longing to be rid of us."

Mr. Rutherglen passed round the bottle. For many years his women-folk had watched him enjoy his wine; they had always been aware at each meal just how much he enjoyed it—one day more or less than another, and so on. It had never made him jolly to them. Now directly he drank with other men he became genial and expansive, and pressed the wine on them with a purely unselfish wish for their enjoyment. Many men who have not the habit of bestowing things are yet willing to bestow their own weaknesses.

"Well, now," he said to Mr. Bligh, "what do you find there is *in* this diving, if I don't intrude?"

"Not what there ought to be," said Mr. Bligh. "Now just look at prize-fighting, or look at football, or look at jockeys."

"I'll tell you what it is," said Mr. Rutherglen; "the public doesn't understand it."

"And yet it's a funny thing," said Mr. Bligh, "you'll dive before a large crowd, and you'll almost hear them all holding their breath, and they're as keen as can be."

"Yes, and they'll hardly be at the trouble to learn to swim, let alone dive," said Mr. Rutherglen.

"Personally I never took up diving," said Harry, impartially, "never cared about it. But I think you're wrong about swimming; I can't remember the time when I couldn't swim."

"For three years I taught swimming in the baths at Rugby," said Mr. Bligh. "Well, sir, I suppose I should have stuck to it, but I tried something else."

"I don't wonder at you," said Mr. Rutherglen, to whom the occasion—the company and the wine—were singularly gratifying, and little ordinary remarks took on a colour of importance.

"I became an auctioneer and estate agent," said Mr. Bligh, "my father's profession. I don't see why one should be better than one's father. So that's been my trade."

"Quite a pleasant one, too, I dare say," said Mr. Rutherglen. "And as for the profits attaching, I could tell you of some remarkable things that have happened in your profession, sir. Fairy tales, you'd say they were, if I was to withhold the names."

"I set up not seven miles from Croydon," said Mr. Bligh. "You'd think that was a likely spot? It was a pretty place, only wanted opening up. Well, I've left it, and not before I gave it a fair trial."

"And present intentions?" asked Mr. Rutherglen, genially.

"Well, I thought I'd look round for a bit," said Mr. Bligh, with his kind of slow volubility. "I've got a few things ahead. I've got to dive off Eastbourne pier in August, and so on. If anything more besides the competition should turn up in these parts I should be glad of it. It's a strange thing, I've always fancied coming north. Now there's some fine baths at Brestwater, so I've been told."

"You should stay in the neighbourhood," said Mr.

Rutherglen; "you should make a point of it. Take it from me, this contest will be of the very first importance. Here's Maxwell diving off the steps just when he pleases. What one has, the other ought to have, I say. What's your opinion, Adams?"

"Oh, certainly," said Harry; "that's absolutely true."

"Yes, I fancy most men would agree with me," said Mr. Rutherglen. "What advantages the one has, the other should have as well. Well, Adams, who's your man?"

CHAPTER V

I

THAT night Effie unhung her father's suit, taking care not to touch the shapely arm, and stuffed it in under the rolled carpet. The door of the room was a flimsy batten door; it was so ill-fitting that there was a wide space between it and the floor; she laid down her dressing-gown along the space.

She could have most intelligent forethought and care for her own emotions. She lay down on the bed as a kind of rehearsal, to see if from there, where she was to spend her hours, any possible improvement might occur to her while there was time and opportunity to accomplish it. She remembered the other bed just on the other side of the wall, and she got up and pulled her bed a yard or two out into the room. She then sat down on the edge of it, very abstracted, staring at the floor.

After a little while Mr. Bligh came to bed. When he and Mr. Rutherglen stood in the passage Effie heard them talk and move as plainly as if they had been in the room with her. She sat like a statue, not even letting her body rise and fall with her breathing. When Mr. Bligh closed his door she expected to hear no more.

In the afternoon she had heard Jean through the wall, and in her tired unperceptive state she had thought that must be because the cross woman was banging about in her temper. Now she soon realized that any

sound passed from room to room through the thin match-boarding. The noise that in the afternoon had made her suspect Jean of dropping a heavy mirror she now knew was more likely to have been a book falling—a little sound close, not a big distant sound.

For she heard Oliver's steps as he moved about the room; she heard their starting, their slackening, their pausing; she knew their direction; she knew when he opened the window and moved away, and changed his mind and went back and opened it more; she heard him sit down on the edge of the bed that rung in its springs; and one boot fell off and then the other. She knew how he looked when he was taking off his boots.

She shuddered, but immediately began to think with great precision. Her hearing him did not matter; he must not hear her. She figured out how it would be if she made a sound.

He would realize that she was the other side of only a very thin partition; he knew where she slept.

He would know that if he spoke she would hear.

He would speak. . . .

At first she thought she would sit just as she was in her clothes all night. Later she dared to undress and creep into bed—but stealthily and slowly, doing everything so that not even anyone in the same room could have heard her stir.

So that as Oliver lay in bed the silence about him was as of a little space enclosed with thick impenetrable walls, and the great black silence of nature outside his window. But, in fact, he might almost have heard Effie's heart beating close beside him.

He lay and thought about Effie.

"Fancy her being so secret, so self-possessed! How dreadful it felt at first to meet like that! But she is right. She's always a little more right than I am. I hope she'll never discover that. In her heart she

looks up to me so now; I *must* manage that she does that for ever. The first time I ever took her out to tea she got warm in the shop and said: 'May I take off my jacket?' And she looked at me, waiting to hear if I should say yes or no. Oh, Effie, Effie, with your little ways what joy you bring to my heart!

"An opportunity must very soon come for us to be alone together. How I long to tell her again that I love her! I will say it in a new surprising way. I got a little careless before, but I never will again. Oh, I'll tell her I love her; I'll tell her so well, much better than ever before. And I know how she'll be; I remember—breathless and humble. . . .

"I think I'm looking pretty fit, I don't think she can be disappointed as far as that goes. I'll put on the soft pink collar to-morrow.

"Of course, you never quite know with her. You may think a thing's nice and expect her to be pleased, and then she goes and looks in a funny little way, so that you know something's not right. I wish to goodness I knew beforehand; only, of course, there's no way of knowing.

"If she criticizes me at all, how she must criticize other people! Oh I say, they must come in for something pretty hard; it makes me smile. She's very hard to please, my girl is.

"What a black, quiet night it is! I've only got to close my eyes and I'll soon go right off. There'll be breakfast with Effie. . . ."

II

It was unfortunate that after such unperturbed thoughts Mr. Bligh's early sleep should be troubled by a distressing dream. It let him sleep on, and only troubled his somnolent intelligence, but it made him writhe in his bed, and his masculine voice made a

strange sudden noise in the stillness, saying: "Oh—Effie!" among the incoherent groans of uneasy sleep.

Effie, who with shining anxious eyes had been lying interminably awake staring busily at the darkness as if it were something one had better watch, got up quickly and silently when she heard his voice.

"Now, that is impossible," she decided; it was the climax of everything horrible. "Now, who in the world could lie and listen to a thing like that?" she thought angrily.

She dressed, feeling in the darkness, hurrying so as not to hear the voice again. She carried her shoes and crept along the passage and down the stairs.

She could not lie in the sitting-room in case he came there. She went out of the house, taking a thick rug from the hall. Where she eventually laid herself down was under a tree in a neighbouring field; a thin cold beck ran at the bottom of the field, making a running flow of sound, so fitful and changing that the perpetual novelty made one cry out in one's heart: "Stop changing; there is no peace. Must you be always changing?"

A certain amount of wind had got up, not a steady wind, but some long gusts that travelled separately from afar. The approach of one of these long bursts of wind was heard faintly in distant trees, and then, after an interval of silence, the same wind more loudly in nearer ones, until finally it seized the tree beneath which Effie lay, and stirred it and shook it and then left it very still again.

As time went on Effie heard a new sound in the wind. She could not have said what the difference was, but she heard dawn in it; she knew plainly that it came from the dawn, and she opened her eyes and saw through a great deal of blackness to a little grey in the east. The flesh on her thigh at each side felt bruised, or

if she lay on her back it seemed impossible to nurse any warmth.

She got up and walked across the grey field. When she was still some distance from the house she already began to walk on tip-toe. She stole into the sitting-room.

She set to work to make a fire. Out in one of the little sheds there stood a high solid pile of newspapers. There was not a person in the house who was not imbued with a sense of the importance of the height of this pile in relation to a pale crumbling beam that ran along the wall of the shed. The whole family had feelings about the paper not dropping below the beam.

But Effie was not going to skimp her fire on account of all that. She snatched angrily at an extravagant handful of the paper and took it in to the fire-place, which was deep and dark like a little separate room. She wanted a quick easy fire. She found the shed containing dry kindling-wood locked, and she had next to put on her fire damp sticks, about two inches round, with their black smooth bark still upon them. On the top she propped the heavy logs, and had an aching impatience for warmth.

The paper flared up very pleasantly, and Effie knelt low and close. It flared up and smouldered away to nothing, with a faint crackling in its ashes, but no sound of kindling in the dark sticks. She fetched more papers and fed the fire, and for nearly an hour she coaxed it, and her sticks never caught. And all the time the sun was creeping up in the sky, but Effie, kneeling bitterly before her black hearth, did not notice it.

In a corner of the room there happened to be a basket full of clothes-pegs, lovely dry wood, pale and light with weather-bleaching. Effie filled her hands with them and re-made the fire, while on that strange expressive face of hers there came a definite hypocritical look of virtue. The fire caught and crackled and

blazed, the flame leaping on everything that lay there, as if it had just recognized with surprise that all this was fuel.

Effie trembled a little in her knees with the long kneeling and the cold and the fatigue of sleeplessness. She pushed her hair back with brown smoky hands and stood up to stretch herself. Up till now her eyes had been looming sullenly through straggling hair, with no sight for anything but the black failure in front of her. Now when the fire blazed she stood up and looked round.

The room was full of a wonderful soft brightness; such warm brilliant interior light made her walk to the hall-door to see what must be outside.

The sun shone on her as she stepped out; she felt something warm and sweet on her chest; then something exquisitely warm touched the top of her head; she stepped further and further down the garden and out of the gate.

III

Far down the road she met Clive. She dipped her hands in the cold road-side stream, and when she had washed them she washed her face. Her hair was a little straggling, her brown dress short and straight; she looked almost like a beautiful ragged gypsy-child. Clive thrilled to see her. They met each other in the early morning with something strangely sweet and shy in their hearts.

The glories of solitude and truancy hardly needed to be spoken. They turned their backs on the people and the places they knew, and with the perfect thrill of love and adventure set out on a journey from which they did not return till evening.

At the gate in the dark he bent his head to kiss her, but she put him off as if they must just wait for a

moment until she had said something. So he waited while she spoke.

"How perfectly I love you! In all this talk we have had to-day, what union I have felt between our spirits!"

"Yes, my darling, and I kiss you for the sign of that."

"And when I think that you love me too, I really don't know how I go on living. I could hardly bear to-day the beauty there was in things, people, and the weather, and especially God, because of you."

As if, having expressed herself, everything was finished, she began to turn away. She had, then, forgotten. He drew her to him.

"But, oh, Clive, wait, wait a little!"

"My pet, I won't wait."

"But if I begged you to you would. Oh, and I do beg you, Clive."

He marvelled at the strength of her delicate reluctance.

"I think I love you more for your reserve," he said. "But it must be broken down all the same."

"But not this minute."

He smiled, half-amused. Because she was really perturbed, and because for him to plead was such a strange new part, he said, "Very well," easily, and went away with his little gentle remembering smile.

IV

She was so full of the spirit of him, and she drifted dreamily into the sitting-room, and sat there alone; it was the hour before dinner. Suddenly, without any means of escape, she was face to face with Oliver.

Her mother and Millie were in their rooms; her father, in his study, always lay down for the half hour preceding the meal. Oliver found Effie sitting

close to the fire on the floor. There were many clear exquisite things to think about after a day with Clive; he was full of revelations.

Oliver stepped quickly and stealthily across to her; some wild ingenuity came to her protection as she held up a warning hand and said: "Take care!" her eyes on the door, so that he started and looked back. They spoke in low voices.

"Effie!"

"But you shouldn't have come here without telling me; you shouldn't behave like that; you can't expect me to be pleased."

"You are a little bit angry," he said, smiling anxiously, "but you know, darling, you can't keep that up now that I *have* come; it's no good pretending you can."

Effie was very excited. But she noticed that some voices cannot be lowered to a whisper without becoming foolish.

"I shall never think you ought not to have warned me. And so that poor woman is dead. It is dreadful to think of her now. When did she die? Did you have no feeling? You know, I've not been myself just lately—oh, nothing much, just indigestion, probably; but it makes me feel strange—quite different, really. I mean, if you should think me different you will know. Now a thing like that poor woman dying,—I dare say at one time it wouldn't have seemed so dreadful, so utterly . . . oh, absolutely impossible to bear!"

"Effie, you needn't worry about that at all. Listen——"

"No, no, I don't expect you to understand. It must be something in my nature. Oh, what a shocking thing! what a sad thing!" she said, crying.

"Effie, she isn't dead at all. That's not why I came. I came because I couldn't keep away."

Effie looked angrily at him. All her strong feeling, not able to be diminished in quantity, and yet obliged

to change in character, became anger against him instead. She spoke in a scathing way, while he pressed her hand harder and harder, entreating her not to raise her voice.

"You shift and change; you don't keep to what you say. You think you've only just got to want a thing, and then it's all right. You didn't tell me you were coming in case I'd stop you. But I'll tell you one thing you forget," she said tauntingly. "You forget about my opinion of you."

"Effie, be quiet! They will be coming if they hear you. What's the matter with you? Think, think, we're together, and nothing matters except that."

"That is what you say."

Her words may have been cruel, but, still more, the passionate, unattained beauty of her lips and eyes was a cruelty to him.

"Effie, you are mine, aren't you?"

"Yes, I know."

"We've loved each other and promised each other, and you let a silly little quarrel spoil everything. Oh, if you knew how I have thought of this first time together!"

"I didn't know it was a quarrel," she said.

"Then that's all right, that's better, darling. It was nothing, I know that. It was my fault. Now kiss me and we will be as happy as ever."

In her great impotent anger Effie wanted to say to him: "It wasn't a quarrel, it wasn't your fault—only just that I hated you." But with her sudden keen memory of old tenderness the clash was too great.

"We will kiss," he said again, whispering closer to her, "and forget everything."

She knew no path of resistance. The great overwhelming fact was that they had a bond. Necessity almost became instinct. Her face was all wet with tears she had lately shed without even trying to check

them. She put up her wet face, mutely asking for the kiss which fate and duty and habit inexorably imposed. Those things did their work. At first she bore his kiss, but soon her lips were pressed to his.

Released, she rocked herself quietly to and fro, hardly listening to what he said.

"Part of me!" she was thinking. "I am made of it. How could I ever forget? Directly I saw him I remembered. How strange that I should have needed to see him. . . ."

The half hour before dinner in the sitting-room became their meeting time and place.

CHAPTER VI

I

Out of all that Mrs. Rutherglen had to say when she first heard of Millie's engagement, one phrase was disentangled for future consistent use. She said to Millie: "You have made me very happy, my darling girl," and seemed to suggest that even supposing this had not been the clinching motive of the engagement, Millie must at the same time feel it to be an extraordinarily fortunate and conclusive incident. It became the formula with which she conveyed or commented on the news. "The dear girl has made me very happy."

Effie, in the first hearing of the tidings, looked at Millie, and Millie looked at her, but neither spoke, and neither would have known what to say. These looks they gave each other were the chief means of their strange unwilling communication. They were looks of extraordinary familiarity and penetration, though guarded and cold in their outward expression. They spoke scarcely at all to each other, and yet were never without some vague sense of the other's importance, and of a similarity, and a bond. By their looks they did not so much as listen to each other.

That the engagement should be passed in silence between them did not, as might be expected, help to widen the distance between them. It made them the more conscious of the other's mute, almost cruel, attentiveness and understanding.

To Clive's mind the engagement caused a good deal of a kind of impersonal dissatisfaction. Besides that, he thought of Millie with a little awe and a little shame, and it hurt him considerably that this should be so. Between himself and what was beautiful he wanted nothing but the freest, clearest, most light-hearted ties. One day when he saw from the house Millie alone pacing up and down the garden he felt a great impulse to go out to her, and by word and look and feeling exchange some understanding (which, however, could not be quite sincere) and love (which he did not inevitably feel). As he put it inexplicitly to himself, he would "make it beautiful again." And then Clive, who was gradually awakening to some better knowledge of himself than he had ever had before, and to some dissatisfaction with things which were not essential truth, had a thought of Effie, and remained where he was. "How that girl has uplifted my heart!" he said simply to himself.

But he still had his multitude of interests. Effie often felt that he was like a bird flying away from her, and that, as with a bird, any clutching grasp would be a cruelty or a failure. Even the little details of daily life could claim his attention utterly. Effie never lost consciousness of him for a moment when she was in his presence, but she saw him lose consciousness of her in any little outside occupation or interest that presented itself.

She felt indulgently towards him for these abstractions, and yet they made her gloomy. So sometimes she tried to interest him out of them.

One afternoon she watched him trying to sharpen a pencil. Though he did it with careful skill the lead fell out each time he cut round it; he went on with great intentness and perseverance. While he was at it Mrs. Rutherglen left the room. Not nearly often enough, Effie thought, did she and Clive have a quiet

indoor time together, and she wanted him to notice quickly that they were alone—as she must have noticed it even if her occupation had been a most perilous or absorbing one. But he stood by the fireplace, with his eyes intent, his lips pressed together, his strong hand working delicately, quite unaware of Effie. Her great gloomy eyes were fixed upon him, watching not so much his efforts as his absorption.

"How quiet the house seems now, Clive!"

Clive agreed without opening his mouth.

"There! It's broken again!" said Effie.

"What shall we do from now till tea?" she said, after a pause.

"What would you like?" Clive asked absently.

"Something nice," said Effie brightly. But then there was a long silence.

"It's so lovely and quiet," said Effie, "with just you and me."

"Where is every one?" asked Clive, still working.

"Millie's out with Harry, and Mr. Bligh's out with father."

"No good!" said Clive. "This rotten pencil must have had a great fall and broken every bone in its body." He threw it in the fire. "Well, Effie"—and now when he turned to her his attention was something incredibly bright and precious.

As time went by, and Effie was firm in her timid apologetic way in her desire that they should not kiss each other, and as she became more confident in her general manner, Clive occasionally felt great dissatisfaction in regard to her. He was too proud to admit to himself that he was incensed by her withholding, and he attributed his dissatisfaction to any other cause in her rather than to that. He looked for other grounds of complaint in his avoidance of the true one.

"She knows a lot, of course, but she doesn't really say clever things. I do wish she would concentrate

on her conversation a little more," he thought, getting quite angry. "She's apt to say a thing with a kind of importance—much more than the thought will hold. Of course I'm not saying that people don't feel there is a certain gravity and sweetness in her—very probably they do. But I wish she would express herself more saliently." And sometimes he resented her beauty, and tried to think her looking ugly, so that his displeasure could be nailed to that instead of to what was offensive to his pride.

But in spite of the fact that he was sometimes moody as he dwelt on this resentment, he still threw himself into his enthusiasms as he had always done, and, as of old, they were the slightly unnatural expression of something most natural in his heart. The feeling was inevitable, the expression not so. But if the enthusiasm was forced, the concentration of his mind on many different things was natural and complete, and Effie often felt dropping between them the curtain of his unconsciousness of her.

One night he forgot to say good-bye to her. He had brought over with him after dinner a writer of some fame, who was staying for the week-end at Skellow Grange. This man's mind excited Clive, and made him bent on getting into intimate touch. All the evening he was attentive, fascinated, absorbed in his solitary purpose. He cared so much for this man's genius, and was willing to be utterly subservient. But at the same time he was certain to raise any subservient part out of the dust by sheer intensity and exaggeration. If he must only attend, he yet did it marvellously.

The interesting talk of the novelist came to Effie only as it were through Clive. She watched him in her rather gloomy, brooding way—that and her quick uneasy smile were the two expressions most common to her. "Ah, how quickly he understood that!"

she thought, as she listened and watched. "There is nothing his brain is not ready for, to take in coolly and quickly—nothing in this world. Oh!" she sighed, "how far such a being is from me!" Clive never glanced in her direction.

All the latter part of the evening she was counting on the fact that at least when he went there must be a word and a look straight for her. The two men shook hands with Mrs. Rutherglen, who had been exceedingly sleepy, but who brightened up wonderfully at their going. They lingered a little in their farewells. As they shook hands with Millie, Clive said, "Here you see a great believer in Conrad." They discussed him, moving towards the door; the writer mentioned his perfect realism in imagination.

"Yes," said Clive, "he imagines as if he were observing."

"But," said the writer, "do you notice that he becomes a martyr to the necessity to explain the source of the narrative? He won't make use of an author's privilege of knowing without being told. He will explain how it came to his ears. Of course he need not—he could convince you so well without that."

They were loitering at the door. Effie stared at them with great dread.

"Yes, all that heavy machinery doesn't help one's convictions," said Clive; "I mean the machinery of miraculous memories, and records, and diaries. I *won't* believe in their memories."

"The exaggerated determination to be real actually introduces the element of disbelief."

From the door Clive suddenly turned back his fine friendly look for a last good-bye. It embraced them all for a moment. Effie knew that he was quite unaware that he had not shaken hands with her. He vanished and the outer door banged.

The next day Millie and Effie spent at Skellow

Grange, enjoying the society of the important visitor. They spent a very happy day of ease and laughter and talk about books. Effie, with her new manner of composure, was very beautiful to spend a day with. On rare peaceful days one could feel that each hour seemed to fulfil some new deep beauty in her, and to unfold some possibility of perfect familiarity and peace.

Clive took them back to their home in the evening. Oliver was waiting for them in the garden. Clive observed that his eager look of greeting was met by Effie with a certain amount of consciousness.

As he walked home alone he resented the perfect approval that Effie had all day been exciting in him. He wanted to turn that approval into disapproval, so as to account for something that was unsatisfied in his heart. He would not acknowledge even the suspicion that he, with all his mastery and success, had only an imperfect hold upon her love; he would hardly allow himself explicity to notice that from her state of breathless hungry love she had made some recovery of composure.

So his dissatisfaction again settled on her conversation, which perhaps lent itself to his criticism more easily than anything else. "She says flat little things that anyone in the world might say." Clive strode over the ground—on his face a rare look of unhappy abstraction, the mouth fallen a little, which showed an intimate and rather sad aspect of one whose face was habitually bright and tense with expression.

"What's that word she will use? Oh yes—'pleasant.' 'Isn't it a pleasant day?' she says. And then she said, 'I have just been all round the bottom of the hill; the sheep had come down and were standing there so still; it was a very pleasant sight.' Of course it's all right if you know her, but that kind

of remark is hardly going to impress a stranger especially if he happens to be a man of genius.

"And she says trivial things elaborately. 'I do think literature is *such* a wonderful help in the world!' —or something like that, with her eyes looking important and discovering.

"People simply aren't going to listen to that kind of thing."

CHAPTER VII

I

CLIVE always held a supreme place with those who loved him; there was something so utterly absorbing and exciting in his charm. It had been Effie's very exaggeration of this absorption that had been the great conspicuous thing about her during the last few months. There had been something so single, so guileless, so entirely convincing about her absorption that now to suspect its genuineness turned the world upside down. Yet suspicion was bound to come, and when it came it gained ground quickly.

Effie could not hide from Clive the fact that between her and Oliver there was something which she had not told him. Indeed, her misery brought with it a kind of defiance which made her even careless; she was almost eager for Clive to see everything there was to see of some private understanding between herself and Oliver, and then, as it were, she defied him with all her mind to change his love on that account. For him to see what there was to see would be a danger passed.

Clive was more puzzled and interested than dismayed. One aspect of it all pleased him. "Then we can each have friends," he thought, "and that is a wise arrangement. But oh, that strange girl!"...

But Clive had sudden bursts of feeling, which took him by surprise, not conforming with his experience of himself.

One evening he turned into the Rutherglen's house

unexpectedly as he was passing. It was shortly before the dinner-hour; he wanted to see Effie's look of keen true love, to be with her for ten minutes, and go on his way.

He found her in the sitting-room with Oliver. She half rose from her chair. Her look was startled, nothing else. Her face was very expressive; it showed she was quite absorbed in being startled, as she could so quickly lose sight of all other considerations for the sake of one little immediate one.

"Is that you, Clive? Why have you come?"

He felt a sudden fury in his heart, but left that alone.

"I was actually passing the door," he said. "I came in though I knew I only had time to walk in and out again. So good-night, Effie. Good-night, Bligh."

"Good-night," they both said, and Clive walked away.

At the end of the garden he heard a step running behind him, and turned to meet Effie. She smiled as she came up to him; she took hold of his coat and held it tightly, nervously stroking his arm with her other hand; she seemed to think that no affront had been made upon their love and understanding, and that it was possible just to stand like this in mute happiness, with glowing hearts. Keen resentment filled his mind, resentment that was very strange to him, because in all the history of his friendships he had held a position which did not admit of his experiencing this kind of feeling. He drew away but her hold on his sleeve became one of fear.

"You don't love me at this moment," she said with dreadful sadness. "You are not satisfied with me. Clive, Clive," she whispered, "is it nothing to you to be a person's whole life and sweetness?"

"Am I that, Effie?"

"Oh Clive, you are."

"And there is nothing you would like to say to me? Nothing which could be made more pleasing by open honest statements?"

"*Nothing*," said Effie. Deceit suddenly became fertile and elaborate. "Oh Clive," she smiled, "I believe I can guess just where you are going wrong in your ideas. Imagine your being wrong about anything! Oh, my dear, I think I like you to have funny, wrong little ideas."

After they had parted and Effie walked up the garden she felt a nervous horror of her lie. She had so long been used to laying the blame for any deceit upon her father, who had imposed certain deceit upon his family, that she thought of him now by force of habit as a kind of justification.

"Well," she said vaguely to herself, "father never should have . . . ." and thought trailed away on comforted lines.

II

Mr. Bligh was in correspondence with the management of the baths at Brestwater, and there seemed to be some probability that he would obtain the post of instructor there. He was making every attempt to secure it. And whenever the weather was mild he went to swim in the lake, and Effie was glad to see him go.

She knew there was tragedy ahead for her, but she postponed it; she even postponed the very fear of it. She took things as they came, day by day, and met them with deceit, or suffering, or self-congratulation if they were less bad than they might have been. One of the things she had to meet from day to day was Oliver's fretful jealousy.

He accompanied her one morning on a walk which she had tried to take alone. She always evaded him

as much as she could without having the appearance of doing so. She had instituted regular hours for her studies, which she adhered to with such a show of conscientiousness and importance that it would have taken a braver man than Mr. Bligh to try to persuade her away. But she was not often able to get out alone.

This morning as they walked she could see that he was fuming with some kind of wrath against her, and she waited, exaggerating the action with which she turned her head this way and that to look interestedly about her—so that he might notice and be conscious of her indifference to his temper.

"When you wrote you gave me to understand that man's diving was bad," he said at last. "Where was the truth in that?"

"I suppose I wanted to please you," she said coldly.

"Well, that's not at all the right way to behave. If I was going to dive into six feet of water, as I thought, and you knew there was only three feet there, would you say nothing to please me?"

"Oh no, no," said Effie, in utter weariness and distaste.

"*Well*, then . . . " concluded Oliver, with a kind of appeased triumph.

Effie grew suddenly furious.

"I suppose you forget anything you want to forget," she said, "while I have to remember and remember. Can't you remember Blackdown sports?" She smiled at him tauntingly.

He looked at her with a little fear. "What about Blackdown sports?"

"Don't you remember, I praised that diver there—I thought he was beautiful. I went on talking about him, never suspecting, and you were getting gloomier and gloomier, and at last you said: 'What a lot of nonsense, Effie! He dropped as if he'd been knocked over, curse him!' You knew that wasn't true, and

I knew it too. But I, being such a miserable weak character, said: 'Yes, I suppose he *was* rather like that.' I said it to please you, and oh, weren't you pleased! Oh, how these things are in my brain now, when I want to be rid of them—anything that has ever happened!"

He came close to her, pressing her arm.

"Was I really angry with you, darling? I couldn't be now. What a brute I am; I suppose I was jealous."

"Be angry, be angry by all means. . . . How can I walk when you get right in my way like that? I must have plenty of room. . . ." She walked quickly, her breast heaving, her eyes filling with miserable angry tears. But he pulled her still, in the quiet road; the mere fact that she must be still when she wanted to walk quickly was an agony of despair to her in her present state of mind.

"Oh," she said, clenching her hands, "oh, you make me so angry!"

"There, there," he said, frightened at her passion. "I'm sorry, Effie. Don't think about it, darling. Kiss me; we can never be angry after that. Now what about a day off together to some fine place to make you quite happy."

She knew what a waste her anger was.

"To Brestwater?" she moaned.

"Yes, all the way to Brestwater, to look at the shops and buy you a lovely present."

"And tea at the French shop?" she asked, looking far away with her great gloomy tearful eyes.

"Yes, or wherever you like."

"Or at the shop in High Street. Each table has its own little gas ring and silver kettle, so that you can make your own tea." She was interrupted frequently by a little shuddering sigh, but there was relief in her eyes, or, rather, some speculation as to whether

there was not some respite to be snatched at in this plan.

"That sounds jolly," said Oliver.

"Well, it is rather nice," said Effie.

Clive would have been obliged to smile at this trivial interest she showed, combined with her deplorably melancholy voice and aspect. But Oliver followed her emotions closely, unimaginatively, enthralled—so engrossed by her as she was that he could not remember other kinds of behaviour.

"There is a little switch attached to each table," Effie went on, "and you turn it on yourself. Then of course if you forget and it boils over you have to turn it off pretty quickly before they see," she said.

"I'll see it doesn't boil over," he promised her reassuringly.

"Oh, but I like it to," she said pettishly.

III

They went to Brestwater.

They mostly walked along the busiest streets, by great shop windows and awnings let down over their heads. The buying of an extravagant present for Effie made a little brightness in an unhappy day. They had a painful consciousness of each other. Occasionally they stopped and looked in the windows, and made obvious and uninteresting comments. In both there was a steadily growing anger against the other.

The sun shone very gold and warm; it was almost a summer sun. Even the shade beneath the awnings was full of warmth both in colour and sensation. There were many people walking rather aimlessly like themselves, but these two kept close together through their bond of unhappy consciousness.

Once, however, when Effie was looking outward into

the street, and Oliver inward to the windows, they became separated for a few moments. Effie suddenly felt he was no longer at her side. She turned round and saw him hurrying to catch her up.

"I do wish you'd stop when I stop," he said very irritably.

"I will watch you more carefully," she said with scorn.

He gave her a little uneasy, vacillating look, which was familiar to her, and which affected her to a pity which she concealed unhappily in her breast. For he could never remain certain of his anger against her; he had always the inner uncertainty lest perhaps after all Effie was in the right. And she had this miserable advantage over him—that she did not love him.

"It's so absurd," he said, more argumentatively, and less angrily now, "when one person stops to look at something and the other person doesn't."

Effie in grief and anger and weariness said nothing. Oliver again looked a little afraid and uneasy, vaguely suspecting some fault in his logic which perhaps she saw and he didn't see.

And so their day passed.

IV

Before they reached home the familiar rain had reappeared, and they were glad to reach the fire to get dry and warm. They sat themselves down by it, and Mrs. Rutherglen came into the room and sat with them there, with an air of secret suppressed determination. And in a few minutes Clive came in. His visits now were generally casual, unarranged ones, because he was writing at considerable pressure as to time, and he remained at the work every day until fatigue drove him away.

So he came in now and heard of the expedition and felt some dislike of the bright manner which Effie as-

sumed. Over and over again he felt cheated of the timidity and worship which had gone from her manner.

"Hasn't it been a sweet day, Clive?" she said. "I think when the sky is so bright and the air so mild in winter, it is a very sweet thing."

Clive replied by saying in a sharp tone of authority:

"Euphemia, dry your boots; you should know better than to sit in your wet boots."

He saw her obey quickly, with a look of fear. At first his wounded pride of ownership felt appeased; her quick nervous obedience had testified to his power. But gradually he despised the triumph, and hated that he should ever have been reduced to feeling the need of it.

Mrs. Rutherglen collected her embroidery paraphernalia out of her lap, saying with clear meaning: "So long as Clive is going to be here I can go back to papa; I was reading to him in the study."

Effie's head suddenly fell, her face burning with greater shame than she had ever known in her life.

CHAPTER VIII

I

CLIVE would still not admit to himself what was infinitely wounding to his pride. He fed himself with unreal grievances against Effie; or anything genuine against her that he could perceive or remember he made the most of. He remembered things long ago—how, for instance, she had once said she had no friends. He seized on this and brooded on it; and though at first it seemed only an unimportant remark, open to many different constructions, he gradually worked it up to be something very grave against her. "I hope she doesn't think that does her credit," he thought angrily; "on the contrary, it shows a great deficiency in her." Then on an occasion like this he would go to her, and through his casual, cheerful manner she would detect the fact that he was nursing resentment, and she knew, even more certainly than he did, that he would soon lose his temper with her.

"You said you hadn't any friends. I can hardly believe such a thing of you."

"Yes, I know," Effie agreed, to disarm him, "I think I was very foolish. I never really made a friend while I was at the school. I am sure I should act differently now."

"I strongly advise you to act differently," said Clive. "It is quite incalculable the benefit one gets from friends and the exchange of ideas and sympathy. When people

have not made use of that exchange one feels a lack in them decidedly."

"Yes, but it wasn't for a very long period," said Effie, speaking brightly through her fear. "And now," she said, "I have the ideal friend in the whole world."

Clive grew more irritated. "That's not the point at all. One wants to be unable to pass people by without extending sympathy and interest. And that occasionally is bound to make a real friend."

"Yes, Clive, I see now how true that is."

He saw she was trying to end his resentment; he noticed that she began to look tired; he wished, not that she had not got tired, but that he had not noticed it.

"But I should like to understand how you can ever have been blind to it," he insisted. "Can't you explain the state of your mind, or justify it?"

She felt the approach of the mental and bodily exhaustion which this kind of talk always produced in her. She still answered brightly:

"Oh, dear; let me see; I thought to be able to explain it; it seems very silly not to be able to."

She wondered almost madly what this was all about, and what it mattered; then an idea or recollection came to her rescue.

"Do you know what I think happens?" she asked, smiling. "Oh, dear, you will think me foolish!" She put out her hand towards him, laughing, but when she would have laid it on him her courage failed her. "Well, you know, when I first see people I am apt to think very favourably of them; I quite rush at them to like them; then always as I get to know them some tiny little fault appears, and immediately I am utterly against them. Well, it is something to know how stupid one is. Is that rain outside, Clive?"

"Yes, certainly it is rain. Just when you get to know people, the proper time to care for them, you stop liking them?"

"Yes, Clive, I think perhaps that has been so, but I'm really not sure."

He saw her grow pale and weary, and watched her nervous strained smile; he only hated her more for making him know he could be brutal.

"And at first you like them in an exaggerated way?"

"Yes, Clive, just for a little while."

"You would like a silly acquaintance just because she was new?"

Effie doubted miserably the accuracy of the whole analysis, but felt she must stick to it now.

"Possibly, Clive," she said, "but only just for a very little while."

"You keep saying that, Effie," said Clive, with complete loss of patience. "And obviously it is only for a little while. What matters is that the state of mind is permanent."

"Yes, that's true; that's what matters," said Effie. She felt utterly beaten.

"You seem wilfully dishonest sometimes."

"I don't think it's that," she said. "But I do so lose the point in an argument." She put her hand to her side for some support. "I *will* try to argue more reasonably."

"Don't take for granted that you are wrong, please," said Clive coldly. "I may be utterly mistaken in everything I have said."

"Oh, no," murmured Effie—"and you need hardly say 'please' to me like that, Clive; I mean, we do know each other so very well . . ."

"And look here, Effie," he said, standing up in exasperation, "are you feeling happy?"

"No."

"Then stop smiling," he said loudly.

II

After a parting in that temper they were sure to meet again sooner than they would otherwise have met. They verged towards each other again, quickly, inevitably, both a little frightened.

The morning after this conversation, Clive appeared early; they hardly looked at each other.

"Do you feel game for a stroll, Effie?"

"I should think I do! The weather isn't much, really."

"Good Lord, no! What's a little mist!"

They walked out, feeling happy and strange, not having much to say.

"Of course this day may turn to anything," said Effie.

Clive examined it.

"It's pretty thick now."

"I haven't a notion what time it is," said Effie. "Of course you have to look at the clock for time on a day like this."

"Do you want to know?" asked Clive.

"Oh no, thank you, not at all."

He pulled her to a standstill.

"So we are together again, little Effie."

"Oh, my darling!" said Effie.

She put her hands on his face with her almost terrible tenderness. And then she watched him, as she was apt to do, her eyes dwelling on him, heavy with joy.

He would never again try to kiss her unless there was some indefinable change in her manner to tell him he might. He could do without that; there were other things. The whole world would have to be inaccessible to him before his splendid, lavish appreciation was baf-

fled. But this mystery of her withholding, because it contained a suggestion of injury to his vanity, hurt him remotely, even in the moments of his almost perfect happiness.

CHAPTER IX

I

Oliver went to Brestwater to arrange his business there, and stayed the night. It was a night on which Millie, glad of any occupation to fill the hours she spent daily with Harry, had arranged to have some dancing in the sitting-room. Millie had invited the Milvains, a family of uninteresting people but good dancers who were staying for a time in the neighbourhood.

Clive had said he would come this evening, but Effie grew doubtful, as the time drew near, whether he had understood that it was a special occasion, and she feared that a chance hindrance of work might keep him away. She felt miserable and weak at the prospect of what would be a most cruel disappointment to her.

When she heard the bell ring she went with a throbbing heart to the hall, but it was the Milvains arriving in great force and gaiety. Harry Adams came next, and then the bell rang again.

This time it was Clive. When she reached him in the hall he had hung up his hat and coat and was sitting down to change his shoes.

Effie had always been thrilled—she hardly knew why—to realize that little practical domestic considerations must sometimes occupy Clive's mind—the mind she knew to be the most wonderful in the world. Something melted in her heart now when she saw his haunched-up figure bending over his shoes.

"You have brought some slippers!" she said, in

her tender voice. She knelt down on the floor near his feet. "Clive, my darling, my darling, what made you think of that? Did the thought just come into your head? Did you say: 'Dear, dear, I must take my slippers'?" She was smiling, and yet her tenderness was as grave and deliberate as anything he had ever known. He felt something burning at his heart.

"Some one said we were going to dance," he said, awkwardly for him.

"Yes, and so to-night you thought: 'Oh, I must take my slippers.'"

"You see my boots wouldn't have done."

"Yes, but really, to think of your saying to yourself: 'Of course my boots won't do for dancing. . . .' Clive, does not there seem to you now to have been something marvellous and sweet in that?" She put out her hand and just stroked his foot with her extraordinary tenderness, and the pleading conviction of what she said in her eyes and voice.

"Get up, Effie," he said, "some one will see you."

By his very awkwardness and unresponsiveness she knew him to be moved in an unusual way, and she had a great radiant satisfaction in her heart. They strolled into the sitting-room quite carelessly of each other, not sending each other even a glance, and quickly separated in the little throng. They did not look at each other or even think much of each other, because their hearts were glowing, and that was enough.

At a later time in the evening, which was a particularly merry one, Effie stood resting at the end of a dance with her back against the wall and Clive in front of her with his back to the room, and the wonderful great importance of his eyes, and attention, and his mouth that spoke, all for her alone, wonderfully concentrated on her. She looked so beautiful. He said: "You are my darling," and went on to other secret,

breathless words of love — so that she could only look down and as it were endure it.

He praised her tenderness as the most beautiful thing on earth; with the deepest feeling he said he could not deserve it. "Thank goodness it doesn't wait to be deserved," he said. He teased her after his great seriousness. "I've only just got to change my shoes, and wait." He stopped to wonder for a moment. "What was the secret of such tenderness as that, Effie?" He was still stirred by it.

"I don't know. Well, you see, you seem so wonderful to me that I have to strain up to you. Yes, nearly all the time I am straining to approach you; I feel the strain. But just now—well, you know, a man who's thinking about things like slippers isn't anything so *very* out of the way, is he? I mean, one can very easily associate on equal terms with a man of that stamp, can't one? I can take him all into my little heart easily. And that's where I want him. Oh——" she broke off to laugh suddenly at some one across the room who had tripped over a chair. Her feelings being so much involved she assumed a rather public kind of manner as a covering to them. "In fact," she said, gazing round the room with her soft bright eyes, and speaking slowly as if she were thinking of something else, "I am not really sure that a man who occupies his mind with such trifles is going to be able to hold me."

II

Clive often spoke to Effie at this time of his diving. She knew his motive—how he had his great urgent wish to be supreme, and wanted to seem not just as other divers are, or, at any rate, something more wonderful than one other diver was.

"I know I am a better man when I have washed

my body in a mountain lake, and felt the innocence and largeness round me," he said. He spoke of dives on still, sunny days, when he had seen his body in the water beneath, flying up to meet him. One day he went alone to some distant place and came back to Effie and told her the joy he had felt. He had a way of telling things with simple excitement like a child. "The bank at one place stood very high and straight," he said, "and down below at the edge of the water there were young elders and willows growing. Effie, I took a long run and flew out over the tree tops into the dark, deep water beyond." And she listened and praised him.

She praised him perpetually and systematically, that being the natural work of her heart. For herself she was entirely humble, knowing so little if any praise was due to her that she snatched at the merest crumbs. Once, after praising his feats, she said: "As girls go, you would count me a good walker, wouldn't you?" "An unusually good walker," said Clive, making his tone one of impartial judgment, thoroughly to please her. He praised her beauty, and what he called "the lovely little places in your mind," but by this praise she was never convinced. It was just that Clive was praising because he must — not she that was being praised because she merited it. So when he said she was beautiful, she gave a little hard, nervous, incredulous laugh. Disliking the sound of that laugh, she always resolved that the next time she would do nothing or only smile mutely, or make some dignified reply. But the incredulous laugh always came just the same — quickly, inevitably, before she could check it.

Oliver was appointed instructor at the Brestwater baths, and his engagement commenced immediately. Though the baths were closed at this time, he still had to attend them in order to supervize some altera-

tion in their arrangement. From now onwards he spent the greater part of the week in Brestwater, returning to the Rutherglens, at Mr. Rutherglen's cordial insistence, for the week-ends. He was looking out for a lodging for himself, feeling obliged to do so by this time. He was in a sad, nervous position in regard to Effie. He felt her withholding and estranged, and suspected that the reason which she repeatedly gave him was not the true one or not the only one. She was perpetually reminding him of the necessity of keeping up an appearance of ordinary friendship only; many a look and many a talk were sternly circumvented by her on those grounds.

Thwarted so much, his love seized on any handy sentiment, and made use of it as a means of expressing his feelings. Mrs. Rutherglen had the habit of reading aloud in the evenings while the girls sewed, and Mr. Rutherglen slept and woke and slept again. The stories were of course at times tender in character, and Effie hated these passages, and dreaded them from afar, because Oliver always made her feel that they were a message from him to her.

The reading aloud was a distraction anxiously resorted to on the nights when Mr. Rutherglen was at home. It lessened the constraint which otherwise could reach a terrible pitch of tension in the minds of the girls sitting in their father's presence. Now that Mr. Bligh was here, the habit was not abandoned; he did not, after the first night or two, sufficiently derange them or provide a substitute of conversation. People who were much in contact with him got to feel soon that they had heard all the remarks he had to make, all the remarks which life up till now had inspired him with. That was not to say, of course, that future events, as they happened, would not provide him with more ideas.

For the reading they sat round the fire, and Mrs.

Rutherglen read with an easy, tireless style. The books were selected according to her and her husband's taste. Mr. Bligh always sat as near as possible to Effie, and with any tender passage which might occur in the course of the tale he associated himself by turning to give her a long look, which she felt rather than saw as she stared at her work. She was obliged to sit there and be looked at, though she longed not to acknowledge even tacitly that she was aware of any applicable meaning in the words that were read. Sometimes she made an elaborate pretence of not knowing that his eyes were on her. One way of doing this was to make some careless, ugly movement of her face such as a girl does not make if she knows she is being watched. Another way was to let her eyes wander aimlessly round the room, looking sometimes at objects just behind Oliver, or immediately beside him, but never at him himself. This did in fact reduce him to feeling that he scarcely existed.

Mrs. Rutherglen was reading one night:

"The man set down the tray, and withdrew noiselessly.

"Her voice stopped him ere he closed the door.

"'Has sir Harry returned yet?'

"'Not yet, m'lady.'

"'Do we dine at eight or eight-thirty?'

"'At the latter hour, m'lady.'

"She had finished with him. He closed the door.

"She leaned her beautiful head on her white hand, while her little foot, tapping impatiently, played havoc with the rich plush pile of the carpet.

"Dick, square and bronzed, paced the room.

"Suddenly he confronted her, with a dangerous light in his eyes.

"'I love you!' he said roughly."

Effie heard the tiny stir of Oliver's clothes as he turned to look at her.

"Mamma," she interrupted, "this book is just to silly, don't you think? It makes me shudder with its silliness."

"Oh, I don't know," Mrs. Rutherglen protested, yawning. "But I dare say that will do for to-night. If you'll kindly excuse us, Mr. Bligh."

Mr. Bligh got up to be of use to them in their preparations for departure to bed. He was always thoughtful to perform any little service for them. He knocked over the large work-basket which stood on its own stand high from the ground; it contained all the common sewing properties of the house. Mrs. Rutherglen exclaimed, dismayed; and Millicent stiffened, because that kind of accident annoyed her.

"I'm most frightfully sorry," said Mr. Bligh nervously, as he knelt down. No one reassured him. Then something rose up in Effie's heart against her mother and sister. She knelt down to help him, and when their hands touched among the things and he instinctively lifted his rather miserable eyes to hers, she let her look rest on him, and smiled with a sudden wonderful little familiarity of tenderness. He saw for a moment something living in her face which was different from the cold, sombre love which she brought to their tryst on Saturday and Sunday evenings before dinner in the sitting-room.

For she kept the tryst, and even plotted and prevaricated to make it safe; that was, on the whole, the line of least resistance. Sometimes after the most passionate resentment and unwillingness to be a partner in that tryst, she would still scheme for it, with despair in her heart, and something almost evil and cunning in her look. It was on these very occasions of specially violent reluctance that she was most likely to sink to some joy when he kissed her, out of her very need

for palliation of despair. That was her lowest depth — when she took what joy she could.

III

Other minor indulgences supplemented this one; her way of thinking became loosened; she fell in little ways from the discipline and restraint which were natural to her years and habits. She wore dresses that she could not pay for; she ate unnecessary food out of indulgence for her body; she luxuriated in the heat of the fire, and in solitude admired her own beauty. She took pleasure in Oliver's expensive present of a piece of jewellery; and, in ordering books she wanted, vaguely relied on shifting her monetary responsibilities on to him. There was therefore a definite little fall, from day to day, in will and motive.

Her mother kept an inefficiently vigilant watch over her. It was a vigilance easily eluded, because Mrs. Rutherglen was not imaginative enough in mind or active enough in body to be a real hindrance. But what this system of Mrs. Rutherglen's lacked in thoroughness it made up for in misplaced and mistimed zeal — so that though Effie could easily have half an hour alone with Oliver, she would, on the other hand, feel that her mother was keeping dutifully and almost enjoyably a watch over her while she was merely sitting reading in the sitting-room, and Oliver was at a distance. Mrs. Rutherglen took a virtuous pleasure in her duty, and slightly exaggerated and advertised it. One day in her watchfulness she said: "Don't sit doing nothing, dear. It seems such a waste after all the money papa has spent on you. There ought to be plenty to do. Not only that, young people should keep their minds employed, and then their thoughts won't go where they oughtn't to."

"How do you know I am doing nothing?" said

Effie angrily. There were books lying neglected before her.

"Well, dear, I suppose I can see out of my eyes."

Effie left the room.

When she and Clive parted in anger and suspicion she just fretted quietly until he came again, knowing that would be very soon, and until he came her mind was absorbed in expectation of him. It was after a happy parting that she was liable to despair; then she felt her position was too cruel, and she fell into the habit of distracting herself from that despair by any bodily indulgence that was possible. She had always had a tendency to bodily luxury, so this was a kind of solace that came naturally to her. Oliver brought her sweets and cakes from Brestwater every Saturday, which she kept in her room, and with the slightest inclination or appetite she would go and eat. She lay rather slothfully in bed in the mornings, taking careful measures to secure that her body was in perfect comfort, just right for warmth. She either lay with her eyes closed, or else took pains to prop a book up in such a way that it would not call on the slightest effort to support it. She got very definite satisfaction from all this. And as bodily indulgence is one of the most quickly-formed of habits, she became more and more dependent on these things. Waking in the morning was generally a dreadful thing, and she quickly resorted to the comfort of her slothfulness.

One morning as she lay in bed she heard Oliver next door preparing to leave his room to go down to breakfast. She had a sudden, wild longing for him to come to her and kiss her, to put the final best finish to indulgence. A little word from her, almost a whisper, would bring him. She so nearly called him that several times she took in her breath to say his name, and then decided that she would not. "Never mind," she thought, "there will be this evening."

CHAPTER X

I

And all the time dissatisfaction was working in Clive because Effie's manner was no longer the unmistakable public confession of love which it had been before. He wanted it to be just what it used to be, and he knew Oliver was in the way.

In this kind of anger he said one day to Effie:

"Do take off that trumpery ring. It's shockingly ugly." It was not very often that their familiarity made him careless of his tone to her.

"Trumpery ring?" she asked.

"Do take that off," he said, pointing to the ring.

Her very fear made her unusually defensive.

"I hardly recognised what you meant. How can a ring possibly be trumpery that is made of gold and diamonds and a ruby?"

"It may be difficult," he said, "but this ring has managed it well."

She went on miserably with her defiance.

"Oh, but I care for it a good deal. Of course, often what one person likes another doesn't."

"But you don't want to be seen wearing trash like that, probably given you by some one you'd better not have anything to do with."

Without waiting a moment to think, she said:

"No, he didn't give it to me."

They stayed silent, breathing hard, both committed to something more definite than had ever been spoken between them before in regard to Oliver. Clive looked at her face and felt a sudden horror. "In that face,"

he thought, "I can see the capability of lying—yes, and the guilt." Effie thought: "I will lie, and lie, and lie." She thought a little lying would not do, but if it were done extensively enough, then it would be a power to keep Clive. "I dare say it's wrong; well, that's entirely father's fault."

"Effie," said Clive, finding suspicion of her was a most dreadful thing, "I don't understand you. You used to seem such a child. I saw you first really just as a lovely child made up of simplicity and tenderness. Then I heard you talk in your wise way, and I thought: 'Not a child, but a woman with a bright and rare mind.' And there is something about you which makes that always remain a fresh and splendid surprise. If it only stopped there! But there seems to be a new element in conflict with both those other things. Effie, there is a look in your face . . ."

Effie, after a moment of panic, searched her mind for some defence. Not finding anything immediately, she determined that at any rate silence would give an impression of guilt. So here she broke in with a kind of playful innocence:

"What am I accused of, Clive?"

"All the friends I have ever had in my life have been honest with me," said Clive. "That *is* friendship. Otherwise there is nothing."

"Oh, how can I ever be to you what your friends are?" said Effie, pettishly.

"My best friend, I thought," said Clive.

"I will be, I will be," said Effie.

"In perfect truth?"

"Yes, yes, my most dear — I think so. But listen, Clive; you say I am like a child. Well, children are wayward and weak, and so am I sometimes."

"But with the mind of a responsible and discerning woman," Clive reminded her.

"Oh, but there is no woman so honest that she does not use little tricks in her relations with the one she loves," said Effie.

Clive sighed. "I always used to think that friendship would mean more to me than love. I was afraid of limiting qualities in love."

"You don't think so now?" asked Effie. Clive remained silent, and she clasped her hands in terror and anguish.

"If I am to be only just your friend," she said, "at least make me different from all the others. How can I be to you only what a hundred other people are? But to be different *is* to be married. Oh, isn't that so, Clive, my heart?"

Clive's bearing changed as he heard her strangled speech.

"Effie, have pity on me. I can't see you cry. Yes, you are above every one, because I love you, and we will be married."

"Are you sure?"

"I am sure, my bright, true girl."

He felt unhappy, because he had thought evil of her. His heart made her great reparation.

That very afternoon, while they were in the sitting-room, where Clive had brought some of his work, and Effie read a novel sitting by the fire, Oliver returned from Brestwater earlier than usual, and asked Effie to come and row on the lake with him. He often had little kind plans to amuse her.

To be with these two men together had a dreadful effect on her. She assumed a self-possessed, supercilious, almost taunting manner. Inside she felt like a little shivering, snivelling child. The more she shivered inside, the more pronounced was the outer disguise.

She seemed very lazy. "Isn't it raining?"

"No, it hasn't been for hours."

"With this wind you never know," she said. "I should think they've taken the boat out fishing."

"I've got it lying upside down on the beach," said Oliver.

"I dare say it's washed away by now."

"I only thought you might like me to row you once round," said Oliver, something sullen and angry coming into his face. She watched his discomfiture, extraordinarily unmoved. She turned to Clive.

Her whole instinct sometimes was to create any situation which would be an escape from the actual one. This mere longing to escape from things as they were made her often assume a little pose even about indifferent matters. The most trivial pretence was beloved by her just because it was a haven from reality. She announced sometimes that she had a bad headache when that was not true, or that the book she had just been reading had genuis and humour when that was not true either. She needed to escape from the real world. The actual situation was one of despair, and she took up the different attitudes to escape from that. Her chief resource was bodily indulgence: another escape was to adopt a manner of cruelty and enmity. This was a dreadful diversion from her more natural emotions — a cure as painful as the original evil.

She slid into an attitude of enmity towards Clive; it was the most cruel diversion of all, and yet it did actually give her a sensation of relief from the real state of affairs — the state of terrible worship and fear of him.

She glanced now at Clive while Oliver waited to know her mind.

"Won't it be rough?" she asked. "Won't he row me on the rocks?"

Clive saw something unpleasing and ignominious in her expression. She did not look at all grand in her

attempt to play with the emotions of these men. He looked at her with cool dislike. "What harm can a little wind do you? Certainly go."

But Effie smiled cruelly and evilly, as if she was not deceived by his unprejudiced tone.

"If you both really think it would be a good thing . . . " she began, with her foolish painful smile. She got up slowly and stretched her arms. Her movements were so lazy and indeterminate that the two men who were watching her almost in spite of themselves were uncertain whether this was a move towards the expedition on the lake or merely some further temporising. But she went definitely towards the door. She had a sickly fear in her heart; she persevered in the pose which she thought was relief.

"Coming, Clive?" she asked in her ugly smiling way.

He met her look very coolly; it seemed to him quite clear how he should deal with her now.

Clive had been engaged to stay for dinner. He decided to stay; he would probably never see Effie again.

As he went on with his work he found that he was very glad he had decided to stay; it would have been sad not to see her once more.

The future was dull; hardly ever in his life before had he faced a dull prospect.

Yes, and loving her had been very sweet; he would even still love her just for this one evening.

He felt his old instincts had been right, and that the love which was concentrated and passionate and desired bonds and possession was a wild unhappy thing which he would have done well to avoid, and would avoid in the future. "I'm not saying it hasn't great beauty — more than I used to think, but dissatisfaction is the very substance of it; it makes men and women in-

ordinate. What I love is to love beauty and to take it to myself without a bond," he thought. That was how he loved his life and work and art and movement and people. Poor Effie had drawn him into other feelings. One pities the people who make one suffer. He thought very gently of her, the dislike gone.

When Effie came in Millie and Clive were discussing a book of statistics which Millie with a good deal of enjoyment had been reading. Effie went and sat silently by the fire, and watched Clive. She knew that Oliver, after their miserable, bad-tempered expedition, was absenting himself to punish her, and trusted that she would go and find him. She looked at Clive's face, dear, terrible, familiar, and saw that he looked unhappy. It made his eyes different and very gentle; she could hardly bear it.

Looking at her, he met her long close gaze, to which at first he responded with a smile. But as her face did not change he realized that she was thinking *of* him rather than exchanging any communication *with* him, and he could do nothing but endure her heavy rapt scrutiny, while over his face crept something helpless and questioning. Effie sat by the fire; she had changed her shoes directly she came in. There was a good flame, flickering the room with bright light. Inside the great fire-space there was a row of shoes drying on one side, and on the other a dog's mat. Effie sat in front there in her reverie, her eyes fixed on Clive, her shoulders drooping farther and farther down as she forgot her body in her absorption, and all the upper part of her body, even her head, moving slightly up and down as she breathed.

Clive went and sat by the fire, opposite to that little warm stooping body. He was glad there was this evening in which to love her.

"I love statistics," said Millie. "You enter into

their frame of mind, and feel you could study them for ever."

"There's one great missing statistic," said Effie. With Clive's move her absorption had ended. "That is the record of the number of people who have ever lived. What a failure not to have kept that; I miss it."

"Numbers that are so big that they become merely a sound, and make no picture in your brain, are not the ones that interest me," said Millie, pacing slowly up and down the room. Both the girls spoke to Clive, not to each other. Effie went to the window to pull down the blind, and Millie strolled right away to change her dress.

"What a lot of people!" Effie said. "How quickly they follow each other!" Clive thought at first that she meant people in the road, but realized that she meant in all the centuries. Here they were together, speaking little platitudes; and soon he would never see her again.

"How is it possible we should feel so important to ourselves considering the numbers?"

"I know," he agreed.

"Do you ever think, Clive, of all the numbers?"

"Not every day, I am afraid," he said smiling. To his surprise he saw her shrink from his want of perfect seriousness, and knew that this talk held something for her which he had not guessed at.

"Even if you only take a few hundred years," she went on, "you can realize just a little. How the poor creatures have come for their little stay, and felt important, and then vanished——" She seemed distressed.

"What does it mean to you, Effie?" he asked pityingly.

"I think it helps me," she said excitedly. "I think it gives me a certain freedom. Supposing I seem to

be bringing you unhappiness. Supposing I see in your face a look which I simply can't, can't bear. . . . Oh, Clive, my darling, you are only one of those millions. Can it matter so terribly?"

He looked at her dumbly. She tried to bear his look, but it stirred her so strangely that she began to weep.

"No, no, Effie," he said. "Don't cry. Take that comfort; take whatever you can."

"Oh," she moaned, rocking herself to and fro, "it is no good. You are unlike anyone who ever lived before; you are not one of them."

But she became very gay that night, longing for him to be happy again, and feeling that he was hers in spite of everything, and in spite of everything always would be so. For she knew she was very pleasing to him to-night. She hardly looked towards him, but her face was radiant, and there was a kind of wildness and abandonment in the very looks which she carefully did not direct towards him. As he watched her, the wonderful change and variety of her beauty took great possession of his heart. Her eyes were exceedingly bright and dark just below the straight fringe of hair; she was like a gay French beauty, with almost a Frenchwoman's animation and gesture. But sometimes her hair was swept back from her face, and her pure calm brow was sweet and radiant like a Madonna's. He remembered he had seen her look differently from that, but now he felt strangely helpless in his worship of her as she was. He could not withdraw his eye or make any attempt to conceal his mind.

"I must certainly go," he thought. "If I loved her less I might stay."

CHAPTER XI

I

THAT night, Effie, creeping to bed with her customary stealthiness, heard a faint tap at her door, and went with rather alarmed curiosity to see what was there.

She found Oliver standing outside. He put up his finger at once to warn her to silence. There always seemed to be something undignified and almost ludicrous about his precautions, but Effie tried to ignore that.

He came just inside the door and whispered to her.

"Darling, we didn't kiss to-night."

"No, we couldn't."

"Just before we came to bed you looked so terribly unhappy. Was it because of that?"

"Oh, no."

"Well, but still it does comfort you a little when we love each other?"

"Yes," said Effie, some faint welcome excitement making her heart beat a little quickly.

"When I see you unhappy," said Oliver, "it's like an awful torture."

"Yes, I am not happy," said Effie. "Isn't it dreadful!"

"Do you remember how happy we've been?"

The exquisite excitement increased rapidly. She was so ready for it, with her mind trained in the habit of indulgence.

Her face reddened a little as she looked down and said: "How could I ever forget?"

Very quickly he kissed her.

"And so we will be happy again," he said. His great love was very compelling, so much so that even while she still held him she felt afraid and said: "Go away."

He could not dream of going while her bashful passionate face so utterly belonged to him.

"Go away," she murmured again.

"I can never leave you," said Oliver.

For many more minutes she wavered between her satisfaction and her fear. Again and again she told him to go; each time with a little increase of decision, until at last she half-persuaded, half-pushed him just outside the door.

"You were happy," he said very fondly.

She said nothing.

"And there must be complete happiness ahead for us soon. Effie, don't make me go."

Even at the risk of waking her father and mother Effie could not reply in his same ignominious whisper. She thought his whispering was so foolish, even while she still breathed quickly with love.

"Yes, you must go to-night," she said in a sad little hard voice.

II

Clive told Mrs. Ingram, when he saw her late that night, that he would go away the next day. A great dejection fell on her. "I don't want you to be unhappy," she said; "I don't want you to."

"Dear, I didn't say I was."

"I have seen you."

"Well, just the last few weeks, perhaps, a little. But, do you know, more on some one else's account than on my own."

"There must be strange people in the world to bring unhappiness and evil in your way."

For a moment he weakly agreed with all his heart.

"I couldn't go my own way," he said bitterly. "Ugliness has been thrust upon me."

His look of grief was so young and stubborn compared to hers, which settled easily on to her worn face.

"Clive, you know I don't believe in a hereafter; it's all here and now for me. The one wish I have is that your life on earth, your span of consciousness, may be happy. If that is not to be. . . . Do you know what I dreamt just now, before you came? I fell asleep here in the chair, waiting for you. I dreamt we were both dead. And I turned over in my grave and said: 'Is it all right now, my darling?' And you, from your grave close by, replied: 'Yes, now it is quite all right.'"

"Now listen, darling," he said, "because I want to tell you my trouble. At first the dissatisfactions I was suffering from were just dissatisfactions to my vanity. I am so full of vanity, if you only knew." He was bound to tell her in his honesty, though perhaps he did not want her to believe it. "Now I have a different kind of grief. I will tell you. Well, you know my little Effie."

"Yes," she said, condemnation getting ready in her eyes.

"You understand," he said faltering unhappily, "I can only speak of her very gently."

"Very well, my darling."

"You know how her whole bearing expressed her love — how it seemed to hang in her eyes and on her mouth, and like a fountain springing perpetual water, she just expressed one idea. Well, when, some time ago, her manner changed and she became cool and complex I suffered in my vanity. Well, that is surely the most unworthy place in which a man can

suffer. Now I have passed to a greater unhappiness than that, but to a more worthy kind. So surely you will consider the quality of grief as being important?"

"Clive, you know what you have been to me. You were the brightest thing on earth — a being in whom one who was nothing but sin and misery could live again."

"Well, I will be bright again," he said, pausing, as he always must, to enjoy the praise and importance. "Never fear, I will be the same. But just now — there is a kind of terror — I must tell you — I am afraid for Effie; there seems to be something about her a little different, one might almost say a little sinister — but even that is not really the word; in fact, the word I had thought of really is — evil." A dampness had come on his forehead. He tried by his tone to undo his meaning. He said "evil" trying to make it sound absurd, as if he had used that word merely because it had come into his head, not because it was true.

To speak ill of Effie made him feel a great love of her.

"I think circumstances may have been too difficult for her. She is just a child. I'm sorry. I'm weak; don't notice me. The fact is — I can't bear her not to be perfect; I just can't bear it."

That night he still slept. But as the darkness flew about the windy country in a loud gale, so there flew about the idea of evil in a young girl. It found out Effie's own heart.

She had got into bed with her customary quiet. She could not turn away the thought of evil in herself, when it came, any more than she could dispel the darkness.

"I have done all the wickedness that it was possible for me to do.

"No, there is one thing. I deny myself the only

true happiness on earth," she thought, meaning a kiss from Clive.

"But there is no merit in that; it is by instinct.

"Still, it is goodness to have the instinct. Or, if goodness is too strong, it is at any rate a kind of dignity or delicacy, and even that seems a grand thing in comparison with undignified indulgences.

"One dignity left in me may still save me."

She had been thinking until now of her soul. Having found a loophole by which that might be saved, she next turned to look for anything that would save her earthly happiness.

"Why is it absolutely impossible openly to have two husbands? Of course it would not do as a general rule, but just for once . . . it seems the only way. It is not part of my wickedness to wish that; it is not as if I wanted it for my pleasure. Pleasure doesn't ache so in your heart. Oh, how I wish I could sleep — but first I must just think this out. Clive would be my darling husband, to hold me in his arms and kiss me at last. So Oliver would have to be more my husband in mind and thought. Oliver? No, that is Clive. Now surely I have got this wrong. I must work it out properly from the beginning again and get it right this time. It is so difficult, with this kind of tiredness, to be clear in one's mind. . . ."

CHAPTER XII

I

THE next day, Sunday, Clive came after lunch to the Rutherglens'. In the sitting-room he found Oliver lying asleep by the fire. Effie came in, and she and Clive stood together by the window and talked quietly.

"I have got to go away, Effie."

"To take the book?" She had known he would have to go soon.

"Yes, the book goes with me."

"And you will come back soon."

"I hope so, little Effie." He thought things would settle themselves in his absence, and he would return. He put back her hair where it was near her eyes. He was so big that it seemed marvellous to see him do little gentle things.

"And you will think of me all the time?" asked Effie. "Oh, what a thing to ask you — you with your great giving-out of interest and enthusiasm. I will make quite a big drop in my demands," she smiled. "I will ask you just to remember that there *is* a person called Effie, whom you won't be sorry to come back to."

"Yes, Effie," he said. But to both of them words meant little in their acute consciousness of each other. They turned to move out of the room. Clive made them pause for a moment by the sleeper.

He lay oblivious in the chair, his mouth a little open, his expression fallen to the stupid tenacity of sleep; his full firm cheeks looked warm.

Clive, in the bitterness of going, whispered to Effie with a dreadful intensity:

"*How does he hold you?*"

Again she spoke quickly in her panic. "He doesn't; it's all a mistake. You are wrong in what you think."

They went to the front door, and Clive said good-bye after so brief a visit. He did not dare to look at Effie's face; he knew he would see something cunning there.

But he bent his head down towards hers, down and farther down, until their young hair was mixed together. His face burnt with shame of himself as he said in her ear something he yet was obliged to say:

"*Be good, Effie.*"

II

The next day Clive had an hour to wait in Brestwater for his London train, and he walked along the streets. As he passed through a certain region of large buildings near the station, he saw a familiar figure trotting down some wide stone steps, and came face to face with Oliver.

"Just a minute," said Clive, "can't I speak to you?"

"Yes, come inside." They went in. Clive had a glimpse of still green water in a vast white-tiled expanse, and he smelt the water as it smells in baths. He glanced at the diving apparatus. "They do it awfully well here," he said.

"It's getting all right," said Oliver. "Come in here. They give me this for myself. You didn't come here to see me, did you?"

"No, I'm on my way to London. When I met you I thought I'd tell you; I don't think it makes for Effie's happiness that we should both be here, I mean you and me." Clive thought: "Why shouldn't he go instead?"

Some dull men become very keen when they fight;

every energy in Oliver's mind was alert to perceive and frustrate any advantage Clive might obtain over him in this conversation. He thought: "He won't stuff *me* up with his words and looks." He listened with excitement but with great wariness.

"Things aren't right as they are," said Clive. "I think one of us has to go to make it better. That will be something. Of course I should like her to be taken right away from that home where her father frightens her and her mother accustoms her to — to prevarication."

"Yes, I dare say you do want to take her away. Just for her good, of course," said Oliver, scoring a point by his sneer.

But Clive made the point seem trivial by repeating simply: "Yes, I do want to do her good."

The wind drove the rain in at the window by which they sat; they both felt it on their faces and it felt very cold. Clive thought with great impatience: "When things are wrong they should be put right." He got up and struggled with the unfamiliar window, and shut it. "I don't see why *he* shouldn't go. Shall I tell him of this horror I feel about her deterioration, so as to move him? No, I couldn't say it."

"In some ways it might be easier for her to make as it were a fresh start with me than with you. I mean, her relations with me have always been so open and honest; she has never had to make use of any concealment or deceit in regard to me."

"Oh, you think I'd better go. How convenient for you that you should think that," said Oliver, with his excited trivial scorn.

"You see," said Clive nervously, "I think that with me she might be very true. . . ." But the word on his lips was different from the thought in his mind, where all the while he was making her a most merciful and loving apology. When he said: "I think she

might be true," he was thinking: "I know my darling would be very true with me."

"Has she never lied to you?" asked Oliver.

"Yes, she has," said Clive, "about you."

"Because of course she has lied to me about you. What's the difference there? I don't see it. What's more," said Oliver, "she loved me first, and you've only come along as an interference. Now I want her to be happy. You talk a lot about her being good. So she would be good if she was happy. Of course I want that, too — I mean, I want her to be good, only — don't you understand? She *is* good." Oliver spoke with a kind of noble suppressed feeling, and all his intelligence was as alert in this most important hour as it had ever been in his life.

"You don't understand her goodness," he said with conviction; "you don't understand her at all. I know her as well as if she was myself. There's no one so good as her in the world. That's the difference between you and me: you think she's bad and want to make her good: I think she's unhappy and I'm going to make her happy." Even as he spoke his heart unaccountably failed him. "She *will* be happy with me," he said emphatically, as if Clive had raised an objection.

"You love her," said Clive, strangely humbled, "but don't you believe that I love her too?"

"I love her as she is," said Oliver. "You love something else you would like her to be — something you think is better than she is."

"She has done evil things," Clive insisted, and again made reparation quickly in his mind: "Yes, but you never will again, I know, my darling."

"That's all very well," said Oliver, "but she was driven to it. Fancy a girl like her being unhappy!"

"You love her very much," said Clive, feeling a great pain of jealousy.

"Yes, and she loves me. I don't deserve it, but she — well, I didn't know there could ever be such love." He was thinking of the past, and of last night, and the nights to come.

"She loved him as much as that," thought Clive, "and she can't forget. But she loves me now, and if I had her somewhere far away from him she would be happy." He felt obliged to be very fair and impartial, and so he went on to think: "And perhaps if he had her somewhere far away from me she would be happy and good. Well, I will go, just for a time, to see."

CHAPTER I

I

It was now March, and only three weeks before Millie's wedding. She was by no means displeased with her condition; she had become weary of her home, she had been perpetually galled by the want of money, and she had ahead a goal of considerable wealth, gratifying to the ambition which, with one interruption, had been steadily growing in her from her childhood.

Her time was almost entirely taken up with preparations. Besides all the personal things she did at home she worked hard in Harry's house to improve its appearance for the sake of that strange unfamiliar woman who would soon be living there. She was very separate from her future self, whom she regarded even with shyness. She now spared herself no pains whatever in order to make things easy and pleasant and successful for that future self.

She went to Harry's house every afternoon, and he, full of excitement and importance, worked too. Without any compromise she offended his taste, banishing things he cherished, and exterminating, where she could, such things as varnish and patterns and brackets. But she did it in a pretty gay way, and was, for her, very gentle with him. He kept up a kind of pretence of power and initiative, and asked her advice just as if it was not a command that he got rather than advice. "Now, how would you frame this, darling?" he

once asked. "I wouldn't frame it at all. That's just the difference between you and me," Millie answered brightly.

But in spite of her pleasure and excitement and kindness, she was sometimes very sad, especially when she was tired. And nearly every evening she came home very tired. So that just now her moroseness at home was of a rather more humble and genuinely weary kind than it used to be. She had so often in the past adopted an air of exhaustion in order to preclude conversation with her mother and Effie. But now this was real. When she reached home she always had to convert into some order her bedroom, which during the day had become a litter of underclothes and dresses and shoes and letters. One night Effie, passing by the open door, saw Millie standing hopelessly in the midst of the confusion, and it was clear that she had been crying. Effie resolved that for the remaining days she would always tidy Millie's room for her before she came home.

Millie had been crying just before she left Harry's house, and for an odd reason. During a sad mood, when everything around her struck her as appalling and hideous, and when all excitement seemed false and empty, she had come upon a roll of stuff in a drawer. It was a roll of cretonne with a pretty little blue and red pattern, reproduced from an old design. She pulled it out with great joy. Harry was working in the same room with her. Nothing could exceed his happiness and interest when he worked. Millie gazed at the stuff, and then said gently, "Harry!"

He waited until he had quite finished taking a certain measurement, and then said, "Yes." For some reason he enjoyed the wonderful daring pretence that she was of secondary importance to the work. The little pause irritated her, also the fact that he had a nail in his mouth, unnecessarily.

"Now here is something that I like extremely, Harry. Did you buy it?"

"Let's see. Yes, I bought all those. Pretty, isn't it?"

"*Very* pretty." She looked at him gently and stroked his arm. "Clever Harry!" she said, and suddenly burst into tears. She cried for some time, hiding her face against him when he took her in his arms. Inwardly she was exhorting herself with impatience to be quiet, "because, of course, it is not really that he has good taste; he only bought it by accident." So that stopped her crying by degrees; but Effie saw it in her face when she got home.

Every day the post was awaited with great excitement, because nearly always there were parcels for Millie. With quick judgment she discriminated between the outside of a parcel that merely contained something she had ordered from a shop and one which contained a present. When the presents first began to come she had a most exasperating habit of taking them up to her room in her cold private way to open them there; and what they contained would only transpire casually later, if indeed it transpired at all. But one of the changes brought by the imminence of the wedding was that there was now frank and open excitement about the parcels; they were seized from the postman and were utterly public. Of course, even so there was a certain decorum to be observed. Effie often longed, when there were several parcels, while Millie was opening one, merely to cut the string of another, just so that it should be ready for Millie to take the paper off. Only just to cut the string — how she longed sometimes to do it! But she knew very well that Millie would draw the line at that. She knew Millie would look at her with her cold eyes and seem to say, "Are you being married, or am I?" But it was lovely to watch Millie pull out some silver thing,

or a beaded bag, or an old ring or piece of embroidery; Millie was getting some very nice presents from her distant friends who knew her tastes. The postman came when Mr. Rutherglen was lighting his pipe after breakfast. He himself took uncommon interest in the presents. Once when, in the process of unpacking, a little silver chain had become unlinked, he sat down on the spot and mended it, saying to Millie: "They're pretty little things, but you want to be very delicate with them." He fitted together the pieces of an elaborate coffee-pot, while Mrs. Rutherglen said: "What a blessing papa happened to be here, Millie." Millicent thanked her father almost pleasantly; and Effie, as if he had done anything for her, must needs join in and say: "Oh, thank you!" too, in her exaggerated way.

All that was in regard to parcels; but it was different with letters. Millie received a good many letters, and she would read them and put them down casually in a little heap on the table beside her, and she had a manner which made her seem innocent of any idea that they could possibly be of interest to anyone except herself. Certainly Millie was like her father; she had her own little tyrannies which she exercised over her mother and Effie. Mrs. Rutherglen and Effie both almost automatically played up to Millie by pretending heavily to be quite unaware of the letters; her manner imposed that pretence on them.

The March weather was very cold. On one bitter still night, after rain, a universal process of stiffening was taking place; every atom of earth for miles and miles around was quietly hardening. The next morning when Millie woke things seemed strange and unreal. She heard the postman's voice without having heard his cart drive up. She noticed an extra light on the walls, which gave the room a rather ghastly pallor. She got out of bed and went to the window, and even

in the swift passage from the bed to the window her hands and feet grew cold. She looked out and saw that the world was white with snow.

That morning, when only three days were to pass before the wedding-day, the postman brought a number of letters for Millie, and among them one from Clive. Effie caught a glimpse of the outside, with its wonderfully attractive writing. She thought about the letter during the whole day. It would be difficult to describe the passionate excitement which the mere thought of his handwriting on that envelope brought to her, even though she had in her pocket the rare precious letters he had written to her during his absence. Perhaps most people can remember the tender-hearted passion which can be roused by some little thing, not important in itself, but individual to one who is greatly loved. Effie, during her thrilling glimpse of that envelope, loved Clive's mere handwriting as if it were Clive himself. At this barren time, in his absence, his handwriting *was* Clive.

She pictured the letter lying in Millie's pocket.

"If she doesn't take care she will crumple it," thought Effie.

In the afternoon Millie went over to Harry's house. A little while before she was likely to be back Effie remembered she had resolved to tidy the bedroom, and she went upstairs. It was growing dusk; the room was in a great litter, with brown paper on the bed and string on the floor, dresses hung over the chairs, and reels of cotton and scissors and scraps of stuff on the dressing-table. A woman had been sewing in the room all day.

Effie set to work. It was a quiet melancholy evening, and every now and then she glanced outside. The snow lay on the fields; the tree-branches were dark and motionless; but the roadside streams were still running.

When Effie had partly cleared the bed she suddenly said, "Oh!" aloud, in a voice of terror; her heart seemed to stop beating; she had uncovered Clive's letter, which lay in its envelope in the middle of the bed.

The terror came from mere surprise; there are few things so fearful. She gazed for a long time at the writing, but did not touch. Then she left the bed incompleted and went on with her tidying in another part of the room. All the time the letter was there, like a person.

She tried to forget it; she went to the dressing-table, and made a kind of untidy order there by at least putting things into little heaps. She talked to herself about Millie. "How tired she will be. I heard her doing things at half-past five this morning. What a day! She starts then, and works hard until the last thing at night. How late she is! Well, there's one thing: she'll find her room nice and ready. And it's not like last night either — she won't be wet through." The looking-glass on the table reflected the room behind her. As she moved some white paper caught her eye in the dusky reflection. "Oh, my God!" she said. "Oh, how that startled me! I thought it was that letter! I must be mad to have thought such a great sheet of paper was that little letter."

A few weeks ago she would furtively have read the letter, listening for Millie's step in the hall. But already in this short time the habit of her mind had become one of discipline rather than indulgence. Clive's parting words to her, though it pained her so much to think about them that she never explicitly did so, had been impelling her urgently and strongly from the moment they were spoken. And one evening in the sitting-room after dinner she had been strangely affected by something she chanced to see. In her mother's work-basket there lived a little paper pamphlet

which had lain there for years, and which Mrs. Rutherglen not infrequently took up to read for five or ten minutes. It was composed of brief selections from the Gospels, the selections being taken always from the words of our Lord. It was called "A Little Book of Thoughts." Mrs. Rutherglen sometimes exclaimed aloud, as she was reading it, that the thoughts were very pretty and consoling.

The first quotation on the outside cover was: "My child, give me thy heart."

Words that had been familiar to Effie for years assailed her now with their meaning when they caught her eye. Day by day she purified herself, denied herself superfluous food and luxury, became circumspect in her thoughts, and did this at first with great difficulty and then more easily, according to that rule of habit which the brain lives under. Her biggest and most important determination had sprung up in her very soon after Clive had whispered to her what he had to say, and had never been abandoned in spite of weak moments. She had determined that, while things were as they were, Oliver should not again kiss her.

She left Millie's letter alone, and felt close to Clive. She even felt, when the struggle was over, that by her virtue she had hastened his return. It sometimes seemed as if he had left her for so long in order to give her time to change. So day by day she was winning him back. Already she was sure that she could never tell him another lie when he came. About this time she heard from him that he was going to Italy for two months to write about pictures in Siena. He would return for the diving in July. So Effie had to make up her mind to endure his absence; she fixed her mind on the competition, which must bring him in time.

II

Effie sometimes did things for Millie to help her; and this act of serving her brought into Effie's heart little bursts of love. There had never been in the family any exchange of voluntary labour and service; now that there was a little labour one for another it brought in its immediate wake new feelings of goodwill and affection.

One night there lay on the table in the sitting-room a little mountain of handkerchiefs belonging to her trousseau. Millie, with her pale, worried look, was sewing fast at a white under-garment. She sometimes felt a kind of remote panic, which she always immediately applied, so to speak, to the fear that she would not be ready in time. She turned it into that, and then worked furiously, so as to make progress to allay those grafted fears.

It was getting late; Mrs. Rutherglen got up to go to bed. These days were full of gratification to her. She said: "Good-night, Mill darling. Good-night, Effie."

She went, and for some time there was silence.

"I don't mind marking those for you," said Effie, giving a kind of awkward push at the handkerchiefs.

"No, thanks," Millie could just be heard to say.

Effie went on reading, but soon said: "Those that have pink edges I should mark slanting across a corner inside the border."

"Of course," said Millie. "Well, if you really think you can do them quite properly, you may."

Effie set to work, pleased and eager. She marked with great dexterity and kept something of the character of her hand even in these circumstances. On the first handkerchief she wrote "Millicent" in beautiful thin lines, and stopped to admire it. She

had a delicate touch and was pleased with herself; she was glad it was such an enormous pile of handkerchiefs; not one should have a thick line or a blot. She went on to the surname and wrote "Ruther——" and then stopped. The blood seemed to leave her heart. She glanced at Millie, who sewed unconsciously. "I will hide it," she thought; "it can never be missed." Hesitating at the deceit, she began to make the familiar absurd justification: "Well, it's father's fault; he shouldn't ever have . . ."

"Oh, Millie," she burst out, "I've spoilt one!"

Millie turned her head so slowly and calmly that Effie knew she was angry.

"Leave them alone," she said, and went on with her work.

Effie sat quite still, suddenly deprived of occupation and usefulness, at the mercy of her thoughts. She looked sulky and unhappy, but gradually grew less unhappy and more stubborn. She took another handkerchief from the pile and marked it "Millicent Adams" entirely to her satisfaction. She went and held it quite silently before Millie.

"All right," said Millie; "go on."

They both felt a kind of intimacy or exchange of something a little different from anything they had known before.

When, very late, they went up to bed, Millie said: "Oh, would you like to see this?" and gave Effie Clive's letter, a characteristic, ardent letter, which Effie read many times before she went to sleep, marvelling all the time at Millie's kindness.

CHAPTER II

I

THE wedding was accomplished, and with the first week in April came warmer weather. Mrs. Rutherglen often said that it would be very nice to get away somewhere for a change this spring. Mr. Rutherglen made it quite clear that, having undergone the expenses of a wedding, he would not allow any such thing to happen. But the idea coloured Mrs. Rutherglen's conversation with Effie for some weeks. She often chose the place; she got ideas from memories of places she had been to, or from a book, or the paper; nearly every day she discarded one place in favour of another. Reading the paper one day she said: "Two have been killed in the Alps, I see, through slipping. It's a good thing we didn't go there."

And Effie fretted with each name that her mother said.

Though she knew so well that Clive could not be with her for some time she perversely looked for him and longed for him day by day. In one letter to him she said with shame and humility: "You will find me changed."

She brooded on him—generally on some little one aspect of him; it was difficult for her to focus her mind on all of him; he was too big. When she gave her cool, efficient mind to any study she generally got an unusually comprehensive grasp of the subject, but in her consideration of Clive she could only take

him piece by piece, and she would be curiously blind to any aspect save one small, local one. She reminded herself how many people there were in the world who lived cheerfully without seeing Clive. "Countless people haven't got Clive and are happy. How well I remember those two women who sat opposite to me in the train the other day as I went to Brestwater. Certainly they were happy. They were quite young, but their faces had lines where they smiled. And they, of course, never see him. Who else is there? Well, I suppose that gardener at the school was a thoroughly happy man. Yes, but those people don't know that Clive is in the world, and I do know. Well, then, take Jean, who knows him and has seen him and heard him, and doesn't show any difference when he is not there."

On Saturdays and Sundays Effie and Oliver joined with the newly-married couple to take excursions to the places of spectacular interest with which Nature profusely surrounded them. They were cheerful expeditions, because the normal disposition of both the men was to be cheerful and conversational and hungry on any excursion; and against their combined front of good spirits it was really too much trouble to project dissatisfaction and bad temper. The girls fell into the ways of conventional holiday-makers; the fire that could live in each of them was put out, and was replaced by a dull, placid interest. They joined the great ranks of the Tourist. Effie especially became like a thousand other sightseers of the rather less intelligent order. She met comment or information from the men with many an exclamation of slightly exaggerated surprise. "Is it *really?*" she would say; or "Just imagine!" or "Fancy that!" or "I wonder how many feet that is, then." When they came to where a great mountain was piled up into the sky before them, looming, enormous, drawn

out of scale with humanity, Effie would say: "Look at that mountain," much as her mother said: "Did you hear that?" when thunder pealed. It would have been like Millie in a normal mood to reply contemptuously: "A mountain? Where? Do show me." But she did not; there was now a truce between the girls, almost a friendship. They had nothing to envy each other. There was no longer between them the great inequality which the companionship of Clive had been bound to make.

Friendship from Millie consisted rather of certain abstentions than of active amenities. But she did also say more to her sister than she had ever said before; in the past she had said so little that was not necessary, or that did not have in it an unfriendly meaning, so that now the most ordinary conversation marked a change.

One day the girls were in a cottage where they had retired to wash and tidy themselves while tea was being laid downstairs. They had a little feeling of familiarity and rest because of having discarded the men for a few minutes. Effie sank on a chair, sticking out her feet ungracefully to mark the sense of privacy and relief. Millie went straight to the glass, to have a good long turn at it. When she was before the glass she always assumed the same expression of critical dissatisfaction—though what she saw was beautiful enough.

"Do you want to come? I won't be long," she said.

"Oh, let's take our time," said Effie.

"There's certainly no hurry," said Millie absently, as she slightly scowled at herself.

"Let's take it easily," said Effie again, and they had a unanimous feeling that this momentary freedom was precious.

The cottage woman did not live in a state of prepara-

tion for guests at such an unlikely season. The little bedroom was untidy.

Effie began to stir herself. "I would like a good wash," she said.

"You can't," said Millie; "there's nothing to dry on. Never mind; just wash your hands. It's a strange thing, but if you just wash your hands you can get all the feeling of having washed your face, if you want to; I've noticed that." From a person like Millie the most casual solicitude made one pleased and humble. So Effie replied in her exaggerated way: "Can you really? Oh, what fun! Certainly I will try it and see."

That evening when Effie got home she found that her father had gone to bed in the afternoon without giving any reason for such an unlikely event. His having gone to bed in that silence cast a kind of attentive gloom over the house.

Mrs. Rutherglen slept in her chair, but kept starting into wakefulness, saying: "Did you hear papa? No? Just my fancy, I suppose."

Oliver had now found a lodging a mile away, to which he came for his week-ends from Brestwater. But though he slept away he still spent most of the Saturday and Sunday with the Rutherglens.

To-night he and Effie sat in absolute idleness by the fire—Effie full of a sad longing, and yet just aware all the time of Oliver. Because if Oliver yawns she knows he will look furtively at her to see if she has noticed, or if he knocks the poker down with a clatter his quick, anxious glance is at her, and every now and then he does some little thing for her comfort.

II

The next day, which was Sunday, Mr. Rutherglen made a late appearance, but this was not unaccording to precedent.

"Dinner not ready?" he said, with his frigid bad temper, when he came.

"She's on the way in with it now, dear," said Mrs. Rutherglen. "What a good thing you've so much appetite; it's a piece of neck; I had her roast it; it's a lovely piece. I know sometimes on a Sunday morning you don't enjoy your breakfast so much as usual. Then, of course, one feels it later on. Unfortunately we can't live without food; I'm sure I wish we could."

"Enjoy my breakfast?" said Mr. Rutherglen sharply. "What do you suppose I've had this morning? Nothing. Unless a mouthful of tooth-paste."

It was soon clear that he had no appetite even now —only the will to have it. Effie, who for so many years had known his quick, conspicuous enjoyment of his food, now felt with all her consciousness his effort, his disappointment, his anger—yes, and his fear.

That afternoon Oliver bicycled many miles to fetch the doctor. Mr. Rutherglen, who at first had rebelled against pain, and refrained from admitting the disability to his family, had by now gone to the other extreme of exaggeration and fear. He could not be left alone; he was certainly suffering greatly, and one could not watch him without compassion—but there was something greater than that. It was certainly sad to see such pain—but, oh, the strange fascinating thing it was to watch him being afraid!

Mrs. Rutherglen and Effie both sat for most of the afternoon by his bed. Their sober, commiserating countenances would lapse into a long, fascinated stare until they caught his angry, suspicious eye; and then they would start guiltily and show only solicitude again.

His condition was aggravated by his mental state;

he could not conceal his terror; he was past making any attempt. It was a most marvellous thing to see him utterly dependent not just on their ministrations to his body, but on their strength, on their being there, on their being the same to-day as they were yesterday, on their being the people he had lived with all these years, no matter on what terms.

During the next two weeks Mr. Rutherglen was painfully, but not seriously, ill. Many merciful attempts were made in the household to keep his mind away from his fears. A great deal of reading aloud went on, and this generally had a soothing effect. Effie noticed that her mother's reading hardly ever sent him to sleep. It was surprising what a lot of deprecating anxiety she could put into her voice. More than one was conscious of the words she spoke, one was conscious of her tone saying: "Of course I'm very *glad* to read to you considering how bad you are." If her voice grew tired she made a public cheerful fight against fatigue, and now her tone said: "What does it matter, my being tired? That's nothing compared to your condition." She always walked on tip-toe, and when Effie stumped across the floor, she said: "Hush, dear, papa simply can't bear it."

When Harry and Millie walked over it generally happened that Harry was settled down to read to Mr. Rutherglen. Otherwise there never seemed to be any very obvious purpose for his being at the house. There was nothing for him to do but to sit idly and awkwardly about, with all the unimportance of being a member of the family, but none of the ease of being at home. When Millie sat sewing or reading with her hat off, very much at home, and not making conversation with Harry as she used to do before they were married, it sometimes seemed an unanswerable question why he was there at all.

So Harry was turned on to the reading. Millie said: "Would you mind, dear? It's such a help!" She always pretended that she was going to sit in the sick-room too, so Harry was quite willing and pleased; but when he was well started she would slip away as if she had just remembered something.

And then she would wander about the house, feeling cheerful and free, looking at the colour of the jam which was kept in a deep, open recess on the staircase, or examining the interesting pile of books by Effie's bed, or even looking to see how far her mother had got on with the tea-cloth she was embroidering in colours. For these things had acquired quite a little interest since she left home.

Meanwhile Effie often sat in a corner of her father's room, copying old-master drawings. She had set up a little table for herself, and had found that to be the ideal occupation for the circumstances: if she had been studying, the reading would have worried her, and interruptions would have been more disturbing.

While she drew, and the reading progressed, she would hear not so much what was being read as the way it was read.

Harry had heaps of expression; his reading was like a long spell of that game in which you have to convey joy or horror or surprise in your voice and aspect. His rendering of dialogue was so natural that Effie sometimes looked up quickly, thinking, from the tone, that he was making a remark in his own person.

On Saturday and Sunday evenings Oliver read. Effie nearly always said to him at the end of supper: "Perhaps you will be so good as to read to father if you are not too tired." He had an even, monotonous voice. She said to him once: "Yours is the best kind of reading for him; it always acts as a soporific."

She saw he was not familiar with the word she had used; he rejoiced in any praise from her, and took this as being something high—tried not to look too pleased. And she suddenly found herself moved by such meagre pleasure.

If Millie was in the house she would perhaps come into the sick-room with her efficient air and say firmly: "Take your drops, father." Really, she almost bullied him a little. At any rate she experienced a stern enjoyment in administering the most objectionable medicine. She looked on with a favourable eye while science did its worst in the way of discipline.

CHAPTER III

I

CLIVE came back. It happened that he had not foretold the exact time of his coming, and he was shown into the sick-room and sat down there quietly, as if he had been there yesterday and the day before.

There was not a thing in the room which did not have a completely changed aspect to Effie because he was there. Meeting each other with such extraordinary quiet, or even sloth, it seemed to Effie as if she and he were the only indifferent things in the room. She felt everything around her change, but by some marvel she and Clive were unaffected and dull. He came in to where she was sitting by her little table, as she had sat for so many days now, and his presence there gave a kind of retrospective importance to every minute she had ever spent in the room.

Effie had lately more and more taken possession of the sick-room, once she had realised that her mother's superintendence there was apt to leave Mr. Rutherglen pale and terrified. He had a nervous man's sharp detection of other people's opinion of his condition. If he asked for a glass of water Mrs. Rutherglen, who made a great point of lavish solicitude, so hurried to get it that his heart actually leapt with fear; she would hurry across the room, half stumbling over her loose bedroom slippers—as one would fulfil a dying man's need. She sometimes tried to rally

him out of the state of dread and depression to which she had done so much to reduce him. "You know you're not a bit ill really, William," she said. "It's all just a sham; you can't deceive me." That was by way of jocular comfort. While he was perfectly easily reassured by being told that his worst fears were exaggerated, this wholesale denial of his complaint frightened him thoroughly.

Millie was not an ideal person either; in her bedside manner there was a slight suggestion of retaliation or revenge. Her freedom from the yoke of fear nearly made her cruel.

One day she had been left alone in the room with her father. The doctor had been early, and his mere manner had brought down Mr. Rutherglen's wild fears with a jerk, for the time. It was morning and he was dozing.

Millie watched him coldly as he woke with a start and, so to speak, resumed possession of his features. He had awakened at a sound below, Mrs. Rutherglen bidding good-bye to some one, and a man's step striding through the hall. Mr. Rutherglen, in a dazed panic, thought it was the doctor come back with evil tidings. Millie, who had heard more, knew it was Oliver leaving for Brestwater.

Mr. Rutherglen's eyes searched round and saw her.

"Was that the doctor?" he asked sharply.

"I don't know," said Millie. She told herself she had not been positive about Oliver's footsteps.

In his nervous extravagance he decided that the doctor had come to warn them that death was near. He sickened with fear; he wanted to say: "Fetch your mother," but thought that speaking might make him die.

Millie watched him, and she was always conscious of years of ignominy and repression. "This will do a man like him good," she thought evilly; "this

is what he wants, to teach him." Then she jumped up and said: "I believe it was Oliver; I will soon make sure."

Effie had realized that nothing was so favourable to Mr. Rutherglen as her own way with him, and she rarely left him. She did things for him, slowly and unalarmed. "I never saw anyone so nervous and fanciful in all my life," her expression plainly said; "you ought to know better,—but never mind if you can't help it." And he glowed with hope and a kind of happy shame.

When Clive came, Mr. Rutherglen was more or less convalescent. Clive spent the afternoon in the sick-room, which was the centre of the family life. He watched Mrs. Rutherglen and Millie coming and going, and saw with his quick comprehending eye the changes that had taken place, how they no longer feared a man who was so fearful himself.

He watched Effie resume her drawing (as time incredibly went by, and nothing happened between herself and Clive), looking very sweet, very conscious, with a kind of sham absorption in her work. Both he and Effie lived as it were from minute to minute, on the very brink of the long look, the long clasp of love and understanding in solitude, but, in their shyness, content to let the time go by not only from minute to minute but from hour to hour, content to give a tremendous importance and power to chance circumstances which might or might not bring them together, and to be guided by them rather than impelled by their love.

Once Clive went over to her.

"May I look at your drawing?"

"Oh I'm afraid it isn't good," said Effie very nervously.

"I think it is very good."

"Really, I'm afraid not. I think I have got in a muddle with the eyes. Do you know that absurd

state of mind when you think that one of the eyes you have drawn is splendid, only you don't know which?"

"But I think it is very good," said Clive a little awkwardly, and went and sat down again.

The room was very cosy; there was more purposefulness and peace in its inmates than there had ever seemed to be before. In each of the women one was just conscious of some gratification, as if at some unexpected good-fortune which was a secret.

It was in Mrs. Rutherglen that the strangest symptoms of the new freedom were to be found. She was a woman of very narrow intelligence, able to maintain an absurd position in her denseness. She continued to feed her husband with the old familiar lies, but now she forgot to trouble to make them good enough to deceive him. She told him lies which had no cunning and skill; she took no pains with them, only spoke them carelessly, and had not even the interest to watch their effect. Her fear was dead and gone; only this ghost of a habit attaching to it remained.

They had tea there in comfort and happiness, and the room was full of the smell of toast which was made at the fire and got burned like all amateur toast. The window was opened wider. The rain outside was so fine and from such thin clouds that it did not darken the atmosphere or make a sound. A cart could be heard crunching the road at some little distance; it approached the house, the horse walking where the road mounted to span the narrow rushing river, and trotting fast down the corresponding descent. It halted outside their door, beneath the open window. Painted on the side of the cart was the name of Joynson, wonderfully executed, with elaborate perspective, and about ten painted shadows of itself. A few days ago Mr. Rutherglen had definitely commanded that their connexion of some standing with the firm of Joynson should now be

severed on account of some inferiority he had detected in their goods.

Mr. Rutherglen was hobbling about the room. As he went to the window he said suspiciously (but never quite with his old air): "Now, who's that?"

"It's only Skillman's called, dear," said Mrs. Rutherglen; "to see if we'll give them a trial, I expect." She saw him look down to read the name, but her mind was a blank to any misgiving or realization.

When she went down Clive and Effie looked at each other slowly, both thinking that human nature can be very strange. Gradually the look they exchanged said: "That is what *they* are like. And now what of ourselves?" They became conscious, and looked away.

Millicent and Harry had to go.

"And father ought to be back in bed not a minute later than seven," said Millie with severity. "I'm not sure that even that isn't a little late for the first day. Good-night."

Clive opened the door for Millie. Effie almost wished that he would go down too, so that some change should happen. But he came back and sat down just as before. How quiet he was; his eyes looked timid, and his mouth lay closed in its beautiful chiselled line.

Mrs. Rutherglen came back.

"Perhaps you'll just slip downstairs, Clive, while we get Mr. Rutherglen his water," she said. "It doesn't seem very hopitable, sending you down, but you know with an invalid how important it is to be up to time; so much hangs on a little thing like that. Though I'm sure you've done him a world of good. He feels as well now as he ever did in his life."

"That I don't!" said Mr. Rutherglen indignantly.

"Hush, dear, don't excite yourself, or we'll never get you off to sleep." She began to fuss around.

Effie said. "Shall I see to it, mamma?" and then marvelled at herself.

"Well no, dear; take Clive down. You know papa likes me to do things for him."

"Hadn't I better help?" said Effie.

"Yes, leave me to myself," said Clive almost eagerly. "Let me just wait alone until you are free."

"Don't be silly, Effie," said Mrs. Rutherglen; "there's no light or anything downstairs."

"Very well," said Effie. She took up one of the lamps. "Perhaps I'd better go first," she said, without looking at Clive.

"No, please allow me to take that."

"Thank you, it isn't necessary. I am so used to carrying the lamp."

"I'm sorry, but I must insist."

"Oh, thank you," said Effie. "You have to hold it straight."

"Yes, I will take care."

"I'm afraid the stairs are awkward."

"Yes, but I can manage."

II

Clive set the lamp on the table, while Effie drew the curtain. Then there seemed to be nothing to do. The old nervous smile was showing faintly, sensitively on Effie's face. Clive saw it with a feeling of peculiar sweetness.

"It's extraordinary that you have not changed at all," she said.

"Yes, and you."

"But you know one doesn't remember *absolutely*

accurately, because when people come back one suddenly realizes what they really were."

"Yes, I remembered something so distinct, but I suppose it was changing imperceptibly every day. Now, when I see you, there are, as you say, little old surprises."

Effie wondered how they each knew, because they had been looking anywhere but at each other's faces.

"What about the book?" she asked, her voice sounding merely conversational.

"I expect it will be out this week."

"Oh, I must write at once for a copy."

"No, please don't do that; I would like to give you one."

"Thank you, you are very good. What colour is the cover?"

"Green."

"How *very* nice."

Effie was sure that this tremendous shyness between them would never go. It was a pity that for the rest of their lives they would be on such intensely formal terms, but though they were only strangers, they were at least terribly happy strangers.

"I'm afraid you sound as if you had got a cold," she said.

"Oh, nothing to speak of."

"What dreadful things have been happening lately!" she remarked soon. "The burning ship, and the entombed miners!"

"Yes, I thought of that when you asked me about the book."

"Why was that?"

"Well, those tremendous disasters seem to put the world at such a pitch; they raise the standard of incidents. And so a book should be very good. Can you understand that feeling?"

"Yes, I can; but then of course a book written by you would be in scale with the biggest things." She saw he had a quick look of pleasure. She thought that after all they might on some far-distant day be simple and tender with each other again.

"And did you write while you were away?"

"Well only a little verse, which really I should be ashamed to speak to you about."

"Oh, but please do," said Effie, and wished her voice had not sounded so polite.

"But if I have a dread of you as a critic?" he said, smiling.

"Anything that has been subject to your own criticism," she said, "and has survived. . . ."

"But to criticize oneself is so difficult. I try to read it all as though some one else had written it." He came and stood near her. Oh, that was friendly of him. Her hands began to unstiffen; she could talk more easily.

"Well, and then are you not pleased with that someone-else?"

"It depends. Sometimes I say: 'Come, come, de la Mare, this will never do'! Or: 'Davies, you're running to seed.'"

Effie laughed and touched his sleeve with her hand.

"Of course I can be kind to myself and choose another poet, to whom I say: 'Sir, you've surpassed yourself.'"

She threw back her head to smile at him, with the old praising look in her eyes.

"So you do love me still?" he said suddenly.

"Me?" she asked stupidly. She could be so utterly bewildered at the very question. She really hardly knew what it meant.

"Yes, you do, you do," he said, because he could see.

"Oh yes, I do," she said now, so unnecessarily, not realizing how she had already answered him.

"And, Effie, give me your hand; to sit quietly with you here is such a blessed thing."

She gave it with a great consciousness and tenderness. She saw worship in his eyes, and her heart began to ache as it had not ached in all their shyness.

"But I must tell you everything," she said. "I don't know how you can be like this to me when you know I have deceived you. But I never will again. And I want to tell you everything that has ever happened."

"Yes," said Clive. "Don't think of that now."

"But can I tell you soon?"

"Certainly, yes, quite soon."

"To-morrow, Clive?"

"Well, I suppose to-morrow might be made possible," said Clive, hiding his impatience at her insistence. "Yes, let's go out and walk to-morrow, and as we walk anything can be—that is, anything necessary, can be said."

"Yes," said Effie doubtfully. "Very well. What time?"

"Shall we say four?" said Clive. "I shall dive in the morning."

CHAPTER IV

I

As they walked along the road Clive spoke with great zest about Italy. Effie answered rather abstractedly. He soon saw that she had her separate excitement; he knew that the mere excitement of confiding in him was affording her great relief, and he felt vaguely injured and resentful.

On a high path on the edge of a wood overlooking the lake there was a narrow wooden bench, and there, at Effie's suggestion, they sat down. Effie embarked on her narrative in an absorbed, determined way. At first Clive's resentment was intense. "She ought to have asked me if I was ready," he thought, and for a few minutes it seemed something very black against her that she had not done that.

"First of all, Clive," said Effie, "I want you to understand that it was a very solitary life at the school, because though we teachers were a good deal together and had our meals together, that was only a very unreal unwilling kind of companionship. Each one of us seemed to have some fixed preoccupation that had nothing to do with the others. The French mistress, Madame Duval, was a very dreary woman. She hurried off every evening to her lodging, where she had a little girl. This little girl was two years old and she had never spoken yet, and Madame Duval was getting afraid. She never smiled; even if she was going to, something seemed to stop her just in time. The music-teacher was always thinking about

getting near the stove if it was cold, and of having endless cups of tea. I used to read poetry. I read and read all the time; it was really a kind of pain to me if I hadn't got a book open just by me. The only other teacher was a Miss Graham; she was much younger than the other two, not much older than I am. She was beautiful. really quite beautiful." Effie suddenly looked at Clive with a jealous suspicion; she thought she saw on his face a little responsive appreciation at the talk of this girl's beauty. "You might not think her beautiful," she said quickly, "some people wouldn't." He looked at her flushed face which had so betrayed her with its glance of almost wild suspicion. He was not displeased at her fears. She went on.

"I used to wonder what she did in her evenings; I thought her preoccupation must be better than ours; it seemed to remove her so utterly from the rest of us. Madame Duval did have occasional outbursts of feeling, which showed that her interests were at least to some extent involved in the school. I remember seeing her get furious because Miss Block—that's the music mistress—often hung her shawl on Madame Duval's hook in the dressing-room. She must have been brooding about it for days to get so furious as that. So you see she did care. And I wasn't really aloof from them all either, because I was always so terribly conscious of them.

"Clive, you must stop me if I tell you too much and you get tired. And yet it is very lovely here. Who'd have thought the sun would be so warm and steady to-day? You see, Clive, it's going to be difficult in any case to make you understand quite, but if I don't tell you the little things that help—"

"But of course tell me everything."

"I thought you were perhaps just a tiny bit impatient."

"No, no," he said, ashamed. When he saw that she was almost enjoying telling him, he was impatient; but directly he saw her uneasy he was ashamed and pitiful.

"Clive," she said, looking into his eyes with a most hopeless look, "I wish it was all said and that we were sitting here, just like this, hand in hand."

"But that is just how it will be." He even wanted to see her gratified and excited again, though when she did become so his impatience soon returned.

"This girl, Hazel Graham, never troubled about us or about anything at school. She gave her lessons without any trouble because she was a very competent kind of girl, and then in the evening she went off, pleased and expectant.

"We began to talk a little every now and then. One day she said she thought she might like poetry too, if only she had time to read it. I asked her if she couldn't get some reading done in the evenings. I remember how she gave me a long speculating kind of look, and answered slowly, hardly thinking what she was saying: 'I don't know. Somehow one doesn't.'

"Then she asked me to go and spend the evening with her. She lived some distance away in a kind of boarding-house. I forget how much I took in on my first visit, because very soon I went again, and not long after that I was living there.

"It was a strange place; there was just a housekeeper there, who saw to the meals, and did mending at an extra charge, and stole our handkerchiefs. There were a lot of men in the house.

"Hazel spent her evenings talking and smoking and laughing with these men, always a whole crowd of them together. She was very careless of how she looked, she kept on muddy shoes, and didn't re-arrange her hair, and that sort of thing. I think, Clive, that

she had sunk to a rather strange form of moral degradation, though she was not really a bad girl by any means. But she was unpleasantly and persistently aware that she could attract men just because she was a woman; she saw it as unvarnished as that. Clothes and manners and little ways that other women use were too indirect for her; they weren't necessary, they didn't count. You see that was a little coarse. But then, as it turns out, I was so much worse—

"Clive, my darling, I know it is dreadful for you to be obliged to sit there and listen so gently. I know about that, my darling patient Clive. Don't you feel me pressing your hand sometimes? I press it when I suddenly feel afraid. Perhaps you could very kindly press my hand back, Clive, when I do that. Do, if you possibly can."

"Very well. No, don't feel afraid. I suppose I can bear what you have borne." He betrayed his angry fear. "I suppose your heart has been pierced; well, let mine be."

"Yes, yes, it has," she said, very low, "it has indeed."

Clive spoke passionately from his inmost heart.

"Oh, God, that you should suffer and I not be there to see! I must see it all, my darling—anything that is still to come. It must be under my eyes."

They remained for a few moments exhausted by their feeling, panting a little, very tired. Effie began to look ahead, and the little excitement of telling crept on her again.

Before she went on she said with a kind of comforted astute logic: "That's *why*, you see, you mustn't go away and leave me." They looked at each other for a moment with hopeful doubtful peace, and then Effie went on.

"The reason I went to that house was because I realized that the mere idea of the admiration of men

brought something at last really interesting and personal—well, I had never thought much about all that, and suddenly it had become real and alluring.

"I wanted to be admired by those men, as Hazel was admired; I soon didn't mind the familiarity and freedom and coarseness. A little more each day I didn't mind.

"Hazel had a kind of wonderful purity in her of love and generosity. She loved me and wanted to share any pleasure with me, and even wanted to give up any pleasure to me. She loved the casual vulgarity of her intercourse with these men, and she wanted me to have just as much happiness. But I wasn't content that it should all be so casual and temporary, for even those men who came most often never really seemed to *care*. I had a kind of secret plan and ambition to out-do her in popularity. I wanted the men to find that they couldn't love me so lightly and inconsistently as they loved her. I pretended to her that I was just as careless and content as she was, but inside I was jealous and scheming.

"But I didn't come off any better than Hazel; I didn't come off as well. I wasn't a success with those men. I think they were a little afraid of me. You see I'd begun by trying to impress them with my knowledge; I thought I'd only got to show myself cleverer than Hazel, and then she'd be nowhere. But I didn't get on that way and I decided I was really acting against my interests, because they would respect me too much. I left off reading poetry and I didn't air my knowledge at all. But there must have been something—I don't know what it was—that made them, even though they might wish to do otherwise, perhaps, shun me. This made me feel wild with disappointment; I wanted to say to them: 'You needn't respect me; that is all a mistake.'

"And when I thought they were afraid of me because

I knew more than they did I used to pretend not to know things. I remember one evening they were talking about whether the time was later or earlier in Australia, and none of them could make out, they were in such a muddle about it. 'Ask Effie,' Hazel said, and because she liked to show me off. I suddenly thought with terrible bitterness: 'Oh yes, Hazel, I can see through your meanness!' And so I said I didn't know in the least.

"Hazel used to try and draw me in, and to put me on friendly terms with whatever man she thought was the nicest of those who came. And I would make great aching efforts to be gay and attractive; but it always ended in my caring and their going free. Some of them were so foolish that I could never have any feelings about them, but if I discovered every now and then some little intelligence or humour I became prostrate with admiration, and longed to be loved. I suppose it was the merest little decency of feeling and common-place of humour that I let myself think were wonderful qualities in them.

"The men who stayed in the house brought their friends to visit Hazel, and sometimes there were about twenty of them in the little room, and the air was thick with smoke, and they all had a kind of high-spirited familiarity with Hazel from the very moment when they first came in. They seemed to recognise something in her so that no overture of any kind was necessary. They were all on just the same terms with her—not evil terms, but they didn't respect her and knew she was the friend of what was low in them.

"I wish I could give you an idea of the kind of conversation; I don't suppose I could. I'm afraid perhaps it bores you terribly. Well, I'll just tell you *very* quickly—I remember one young man saying—but I don't know if this gives you any idea—I remember his saying—well, he'd been telling us about

some patent metal-polish that he had seen at Earl's Court Exhibition, and he said he had bought a sample packet and sent it to two maiden aunts in the country. 'Kind boy! Thoughtful youth! you know, and that kind of thing,' he said. 'And five pounds at Christmas.' And they all laughed, and I laughed too. Well that might just give you a tiny idea, only of course it was often worse than that, more vulgar.

"Well, Clive, that all leads up to what I have to say; it oughtn't to take very long now. If I could be sure that it would be over in a few minutes I should feel that was a great mercy. But I suppose I can't be sure of that, can I? I mean, as a matter of fact things always take longer than one thinks. Still, if the sun stays in we ought not to stay here so very much longer or we shall be cold. Especially you, with your cold. How *is* your cold to-day?"

"Oh, just taking its course," said Clive. "In a few minutes, Effie, we'll run hand in hand until we're warm."

Effie stirred herself on the wooden bench. She pretended that it was just a placid movement for her comfort; it was really part of a wild temptation to temporise and escape. Before the temptation had really tested her strength it vanished—as temptation sometimes does, making us regret that we did not overcome the flesh and have something to our credit.

"I dread going on," said Effie. "Just tell me this, Clive; do you know that people can sin through chance and ignorance and blindness—oh yes, of course I mean through wickedness too, but not just wickedness alone."

"I daresay," said Clive, not perfectly admitting it.

"It is such a plunge in the dark, speaking to you. I mean I don't know how you think. Sometimes I imagine you just saying: 'Poor Effie!' and letting it pass. Or sometimes you say: 'I'm sorry for you,

and I don't despise you, but of course we must part now.' And once I dreamt that I told you and you cried. You see, there are, of course, all those different ways . . . one can't tell beforehand exactly . . . ."

She had had such a different expression for each of these things which she had made him say and do. He had learnt from her books just what he would in fact have to do. He almost hated her because with her ways she so forced him to compassion. He was obliged to fix in his brain that he would just say: "Poor Effie!" and let it pass.

II

"Oliver Bligh was one of them," said Effie; "he didn't come very often, and I began to wonder every day if he would come that night. He sometimes did little kind things for me, and then at once I thought he must love me, and then perhaps the next time he came he didn't notice me at all. And soon I thought of nothing but of how much I loved him. Clive, let me tell you quickly, I loved him terribly, because I never forgot him for one moment.

"I had met his sister once or twice—Mary Bligh. I thought her a very nice girl—really, I think, just because of him. I tried to be so attractive to her, in case she should ever say to him: 'Euphemia Rutherglen seems very nice,' or something like that.

"She and I planned to go to a theatre one night; I saw Mary the day before we were to go, and she said her brother had asked if he could come too.

"We went to hear *Tannhäuser* in the little theatre there; we waited in a queue, sitting on some stone steps. At first he sat close to me—are you listening? —I was wild with happiness; he must have been happy too. We covered over our happiness with laughing and talking. I remember how every thing

I said was full of praising and happiness, no matter what it was about.

"Then Oliver noticed that Mary hadn't got any wall to lean against, and was sitting upright, so he made her change places with him. At first I could hardly believe what had happened. I thought he must have some plan of telling me to come up on the other side of him—or something there *must* be in his mind. Clive, I am ashamed now. But I felt so miserable I could hardly bear it. I didn't understand how he could really have been aware of Mary. I had only been as it were pretending to know that other people were there.

"And there was a man standing up just above Mary, and every now and then the bottom of his coat grazed her hat. Oliver saw her put up her hand once to protect her hat. 'Shall I tell him to move along?' he asked Mary. She was reading a book of the words; she just shook her head and said: 'Oh no,' without looking up. She was evidently perfectly used to his kindness and consideration. Clive, have you ever noticed how *kind* he is? When I saw all that, my heart began to ache so badly. I thought he was a person far, far above me, quite out of reach. . . .

"We sat in the pit; he seemed only to think of the opera; and then suddenly he held my hand, and I knew that it *was* possible to love me, and that he loved me. Oh, Clive, Clive, how can these things be? Can such things be wasted?

"Dear, you will try to go on being patient. I suppose I ought just to tell you that I loved him, but I go into these long explanations. Don't try to be more patient than you can bear. Say: 'Go on, Effie,' if I stop too much, so that you can't bear it."

"No, you must go on in whatever way you consider is most merciful to yourself."

"I will be merciful to myself if you are," she said

quickly, so that he again felt himself compelled. "I think I am just waiting to see what you do, and then I shall imitate you."

"Go on; it's late."

"I left Hazel in the evenings now and went out with Oliver. I spent my hours with him, and every little feeling and occupation that happen as hours go by happened to us both together. We were warm and cold together, and ate and rested together—and we laughed together, and that is the greatest thing, don't you think. . . .

"Then one day he told me the terrible thing that he was married. And I spurned him so! It was a very sad story, and yet while I listened I only loathed him. His wife is in an asylum.

"You know how gradually and plausibly one's views can be transformed. Well, this marriage of his,—I travelled from pole to pole in my feeling about it. One day it was a horror, the next day it was a sadness, the next day it was a wrong and an injustice to him, and so on until I found myself heart to heart with him again, as if there was no hindrance between us.

"Only, you see, the degradation of that began to lower my standards all round. After that I could be got to think plausibly about any evil, once I had let go. . . .

"I think, you know, Clive, that for my kind of character it's very important not to let go of one's convictions in the very least."

"She is quite enjoying talking about herself," thought Clive, with a cruel distaste for her.

"I was very happy, especially when I was just soon going to see him; I was happier then than when I was with him. When I was with him I sometimes wondered what there was really to love; and then I thought that love was just love, and couldn't be explained.

Sometimes when we were separated for many hours I forgot about him.

"If ever I was inclined to doubt and be miserable, I thought about his kindness. My reason tells me now that it was only little ordinary things that he did out of a natural kindness, and yet even now I feel stirred by anything he does for me. I used to think it so glorious."

"Yes, I should think you will never see that to scale," said Clive coolly; "probably a deep impression like that never gets adjusted."

"I don't know, I don't know," said Effie excitedly. "Don't say anything at all hard, Clive. I only ask that you shouldn't be angry, or at any rate not show that you are angry——"

"My dear girl," said Clive, "I'd better not say anything if you think that was anger."

"Well, then, you are angry now, even if you weren't before. You must understand, Clive, that there is a limit to what I can bear."

"Effie, how can you waste your tears so!"

"Well, do you love me?" she cried angrily, her face flushed and her lips apart, and a miserable kind of challenge in her eyes.

"Yes, beyond words." He made her lean against him, so that the beautiful unhappy face was put away into darkness. "My pet, close your eyes."

"They are."

"And now don't say any more."

"Thank you; this is so peaceful."

Clive looked out over the great world while Effie's eyes were closed. It was infinitely large and dreary; he felt cruelly alone and watchful and alive, while she could close her eyes.

"It is beginning to rain," said Effie.

"Yes, I am going to take you home."

"We were going to run holding hands."

"Yes, come along."

"Oh dear. But I haven't——"

"Oh, come along," he said impatiently.

"No, I won't."

"We certainly won't stay in this rain," said Clive, allowing his voice to sound angry to the very utmost that he dared.

"No, perhaps not, but come into the little wood. I was there the other day when it was pouring with rain; it was like being inside a room."

III

In the wood the singing and twittering of the birds made a continuous sound; there was never an instant's blank space of silence. The sounds fitted in with one another and overlapped, to shut out silence, just as the tree-trunks fitted one behind another and left not a single crack for the sight of sky or fields or water.

And there Effie's voice dragged on; Clive was quite shut in there with her tireless interested voice, and her absorbed eyes, heavy with expression. Sometimes he forgot to listen to the words she said, and only just thought about her look, and how interested and, as it were, plausible it was.

Always he felt resentful because she could be so absorbed in the mere telling. And he wanted her to feel his resentment—but not to feel it so much as to remonstrate with him, because when she did that he felt ashamed.

If his resentment left him for a moment it left him in the grip of his love. Then he held her shoulders with his hands and said: "My poor child"—his eye fixed on her with such sadness and tenderness that she cried and clung to him, saying: "Don't say that like that, Clive."

CHAPTER V

I

DURING the next two weeks preparations were being made on every hand for the diving competition, and for the flood of visitors which that event would bring.

Every Saturday and Sunday Oliver Bligh was at the rocks, practising his marvellous trick-diving. The summer weather had come this year without any sharpness in its breath; there were long warm rains, and then periods of gentle misty sunshine. Men and women and children from the rare cottages journeyed along the damp sandy roads for many a mile on Sundays, to stand on the narrow beach of the lake, and watch Oliver fly from the ledge, and linger in the air to turn a somersault, and shoot into the water—a strange unlikely bird.

Clive practised too, generally at dawn, with his great solitary enjoyment.

Though the lake lay almost at the door of the Rutherglens' house, they could not from their windows see the diving-rocks. If Effie thought she had not seen enough of Clive, or wondered where he was, she had to climb half-way up the hill at the back of the house. From there, if she saw Clive was at the rocks, she pressed on to a steep narrow path round the bend of the hill, and there, where he would have to pass when he had finished, she sat and waited for him.

When he came he talked to her very eagerly about his diving. Coming fresh from the water he was always

definitely a man who had come from another world, from the world of water to the world of air, and he had adventure and tidings shining out from him, like a traveller.

"Hallo, Effie," he cried one day, "I'm glad you're here; I wanted to tell you—I've just done so perfectly what I wanted to do." She watched him hurrying to come near. His purpose of telling her about his feat was shining in his eyes, while he waited to get quite close. His hair was dark and damp, his eyes black and shining, his beautiful mouth looking a little thin from the cold water. There was something wonderfully cool and radiant about his flesh; his fine neck showed above the open shirt; it was so full and firm that when it was pressed fully forward in front it could make his head look small on a splendid column.

Effie said: "Oh, but there's something else I must just tell you about first. Just something I came on purpose to tell you. Then I shall simply *love* to hear about the dive."

"Yes, you first," he said.

"Well, you know, for weeks past, when I knew that some day I should be telling you everything, little things were always coming into my head which I must be sure not to forget to tell you." She began nervously, but it did not take at all long for her to become intent. "Little tiny things, some of them, but I used to say to myself: 'Oh yes, that will perhaps help to give him some idea; I must be quite certain to remember that.' But of course my mind was in such a state when I told you that I probably didn't remember half the things. One little thing came into my mind to-day." She stopped to swallow, and there was all over her a kind of contentment that she was speaking. He felt bitterly resentful.

"It's about the dreadful monotony of the school-life. It was so uneventful and dreary. For all those hours

every day I was repeating things I knew, things that the importance had vanished from for me after the first or second time of repetition. Sometimes when I was going through a pile of exercise-books to correct them, the only way I could keep on with it was by making a pattern round me with them; that made me hurry on, as each one in turn was needed for the pattern. And I remember how I once enjoyed working in one of the exercise-books because the blue-ruled lines had somehow failed in the printing and only went half-way across the page. So that just shows you——" She stopped, and from her voice and eyes, heavy with expression, one might almost have thought she had gained some triumph over him.

Whatever pity and comfort he might have in his heart, her ways perversely made the expression of those things a cold heavy duty.

"Yes, Effie, I think I understand, poor child."

The days went by, and brought the competition so near. He was thrilled with his efforts and hopes, but again and again Effie caught him with her painful tireless communicativeness. He dreaded her.

"When I had left him there and had come home," she said one day, beginning nervously, and then getting interested, "I let myself have a vague feeling that everything would just fade away. I somehow didn't have to think about it much. I wrote less and less often; I had a kind of faint hope and confidence that we should just drift apart until at some time there would be nothing between us but just silence and forgetfulness. But when he came—actually he himself —here, into my very home. . . .

"Clive, it was only when I saw him, when I was face to face with him again, that I knew how close he was; it was like meeting myself."

"Yes, I think I understand—really almost without

your telling me," said Clive. "Satisfy yourself that my impression is clear and just, and then let it rest."

"Yes, only of course it's so difficult to satisfy myself about that," said Effie plausibly.

They did not talk about the future; there was one immediate future blocking out all that would come after it. The diving made a little near horizon. It was close; it was exciting; on every hand all thoughts and deeds were leading up to it, and stopped short at it, as if it were the end of the world.

But once Clive said to Effie, with his bitter impatience, which he was half-anxious to show, half-anxious to hide:

"It seems to give you perfect satisfaction just to tell me things, as if that were a happy ending in itself."

"It's *such* a relief," said Effie, agreeing.

"Yes, but does it ever occur to you to realize that something more than that relief is needed for the future? Do you never have any misgiving or longing about the future, in the midst of this relief of yours?"

"Oh, certainly," she said, injured.

"Oh, you do."

"Yes, but listen, Clive; it is very difficult."

"I daresay," he said, in his unfriendly way.

"I mean, it is impossible to know what even to hope for. I can't formulate my hopes. I am afraid."

He always regretted having called her out of her satisfaction; she was so quickly deeply tragic.

"If you hope," she said, "you have, as it were, to name your petition."

"Do you mean in the prayers you say?"

She considered. "No, I don't mean that. Because sometimes one wants things one doesn't pray for; and then sometimes in a sense one doesn't want what one prays for. What I mean is, I hardly dare to want a thing. It's too great a power. Because it seems to

me, Clive, that when I want a thing enough it comes. Now what could I dare to want?"

"Don't look so worried, Effie; you look perfectly worried." When she talked in her almost glib way he hated it, but directly she looked fearful or despairing he couldn't bear it.

"You know, Clive," she said one day, unable to leave him alone, "I quite see that all this is strange—I mean, my still feeling a tie with Oliver when I love you so terribly. Of course I know enough of the world to know that people are sinning, and forgetting, and passing on, but with me——"

"Effie," cried Clive, "don't speak, don't speak any more!"

She felt crushed with shame.

"Why is that worse than anything I have said before?" she said, low and defiantly in her misery.

"You say too much!" said Clive with passion. "Now let it alone."

Her shame, feeling she had been convicted of some indelicacy, was overwhelming. She thought she could never look into his eyes with any peace again, however many years might go by.

II

But the next day she was already seeking him again, through her habit of thinking it was so important that he should understand.

He lay flat on the dark rock when he came out of the water and had dressed. He saw Effie not very far away below him on the beach, peering about, looking this way and that for him; he knew what her purpose was when her eyes were gloomy and intent like that, and her mouth pouting and forgetful.

He lay quite still, sick at heart, watching her indifferently from where he was hidden. He let her go on

peering about, puzzled as to where he could have gone; and then she gave up, and turned home again. Though she had had a great important impulse to tell him something, the thing itself was not important, as she knew in her heart, and she could fairly easily abandon her purpose under the stress of necessity. It gave Clive a little pain not to call her back.

He strolled home discontentedly through fields. He began to wish he had heard what Effie had to say; it might be aching in her now.

People were already arriving to-day at Skellow Grange to stay for the week, but Clive did not hasten back to see them as he would ordinarily have done. He walked slowly and purposelessly, and whenever he came to a gate he stopped and leant idly against it before he opened it and passed on through.

Once, standing at a gate, he looked over a large hilly field, with one spreading tree somewhere near the middle. In the pale shade of this tree a flock of sheep had packed themselves together, side to side, mostly lying, one here and there standing. They came to the very edge of the pale fretted shadow, fitting so exactly that they were like cloth cut carefully to a pattern.

Such careful precautions did not seem to be warranted by the strength of the sunshine. It was not a gold sun, but silver, shining from thin clouds, and through and beside thin clouds. Silver generally was the colour of the sun, and shade could be needed only for very delicate susceptibilities.

One sheep alone had an independent spirit and better judgment, and lay some distance away on the slope of the field. Such separateness reminded Clive of Effie, so separate for him now from all other breathing beings. He thought she was like that sheep that lay alone, just as wayward, just as distinct. He thought of her little brown live hands with a great longing. He thought

of her hands because he could hardly bear to think of her face that had been looking for him.

So he opened the gate, and sauntered through, and down the field. As he passed by the solitary sheep he saw that it lay dead. He wished he had not thought of it and Effie together. He took hold of the stiff legs and worked them up and down, hoping that they would respond with some animation of their own. But it was dead.

III

That evening he suddenly tore himself away from a gay company. He felt strange and uneasy; he remembered some talk of Effie's about the impulse to put out a spark. His uneasiness was not because of that, or for any definite reason that he knew, but it was very urgent.

There was no light in the sitting-room when he reached the Rutherglens'. The hall, too, was dark. He called: "Effie!" He heard some one hastening across a room upstairs, and a door opened.

"Effie!" he called again sharply.

"Clive," she answered, in surprise, with her sweet shrill voice.

"Oh, are you all right?"

"Of course, I am. Why?"

He was on the bottom step. His voice changed to something very caressing. "Well, you seem pretty lonely, anyway."

"Yes, do you know where they have gone, the others? They've gone to dinner with Millie. It's father's first real outing. Millie said it would make a nice treat for him. She was going to have something very wholesome to eat, and she'll send him back nice and early," Effie said, with a little smile in her voice.

Clive was half way up the stairs.

"And why didn't you take part in this wild festivity?"

"Well, I thought I'd be nice and quiet at home. I'm reading such a gorgeous book, Clive. Promise to read it next! And you see I'm going to Millie's dinner-party next week. Clive, darling, it's so wonderful to see you when I didn't expect you. Why did you ask if I was all right?"

"I don't know—I had a really dreadful anxiety—well, never mind." He came on to the landing. Her door was not very much open; a little gold light streamed through; she stood in the doorway, partly behind the door; her hair was loose, and something very thin and soft hung round her. He came to the door and gazed at her. He noticed how she stooped a little forward with her shoulders slightly hunched together, shrinking a little behind the door; he felt her sweetness and warmth and shyness; he held out his arms to her.

She looked at him. His face when he loved her was a thing of terrible beauty. He stood above her, with his great strong height; she just knew the combined strength and reverence of those arms.

But she only said: "Good-night, my darling," gazing at him with her tender apologizing eyes.

He said: "Good-night, my blessed child," and went away.

As he went home in the dark, he just knew that there was some extraordinary joy in himself.

His sense that there was purity and discipline in her had often in these last weeks been the alleviation of his bitterness. To-night his sense of her pure discipline was so great that all pain and resentment had to fly before it out of its path.

CHAPTER VI

I

THE pervading excitement had deep possession of Oliver. He was so indignant at Clive's return, and he needed a definite channel for all his hopes and fears and heart-burnings, and a definite focus for his determination. He was determined to have Effie, in the blind stubborn way that wins. He wooed her with stubborn obstinacy, like a person who will go on watering dead plants. He thought of the competition as being the climax of uncertainty and suffering; he thought it would be the means of his definitely establishing his claim to Effie. All round him people's thoughts were running forward to the competition; his did likewise, and he made it a great issue.

Very soon after the competition he would be obliged to go South; he was to dive off Eastbourne Pier in a fortnight. It was a very definite faith with him that Effie would be his by victory then, and as news of his wife's condition was ominous now of her death, he had hopes of the future being straightforward and happy at last.

The only thing was that, once happy with Effie again, he would merely take the little precaution of never leaving her for long. That was a simple thing; perhaps many of the very happiest men had to do it, if one only knew.

Effie, intensely conscious of him, knew his great purposefulness. It was a curious thing, but any great purpose showing in his face, with its look of slightly surprised, discontented endeavour, only served to make

him more unimportant. How small he could seem to her, with his purpose on his face!

The night before the competition day he came into the sitting-room and found her alone. His glance when he opened a door was always quickly round to see if Effie was there, as she was intensely aware. She had been sitting so quietly, almost sleepily, in the window-seat in the dusk. As she turned, hearing the door open, to look into the room, she noticed how dark it had got inside.

"That can't be very comfortable," he said. "Have you been sitting like that long?"

"My back aches," she agreed self-indulgently. She always fell in very readily with his care of her. He was getting a cushion, choosing the softest. He put it behind her back, where she had been leaning against the straight, hard wood.

"Oh, that's comfortable," she said.

In his time he had known how to deal with women. He was quite clever and skilful; he knew a little science about tenderness given and then withheld, and then given again. Now that was, as it were, a discredited science; with Effie now one did not know whether tactics which had once proved themselves effective were not just what would suddenly turn her cold and distant. These tactics being obsolete, he was at the mercy of all kinds of doubts and bewilderments—doubtful even of his own handsomeness, which he had never thought to doubt—and that was why he seized on the idea of winning the competition as a great effective indisputable means of loving a girl like Effie.

"You go sitting on a hard seat for hours," he said reproachfully, "and then of *course* you get all aching. Promise me, Effie, that you'll always put a cushion first."

He exaggerated the importance, by his voice and

emphasis, but Effie always rose to any exaggeration of care and protectiveness.

She looked at him with luxurious eyes, comfortably agreeing that she must always put a cushion. They spoke of it very seriously.

In old days she had talked to him about the wave in his hair in front. On damp days the hair went straight, and sometimes in his anxiety to awake that old approval in her, he tried to encourage the curl to come again. Effie saw him put up his hand now almost unconsciously, delicately to feel his hair; she knew quickly that he was thinking about his own attractiveness. Such a little discovery could come like a shock to her soul.

But they were united. In her greatest distance from him she could not see it differently from that. She had a great realization of it at this moment. She thought immediately of going to talk to Clive, to tell him again of her dreadful certainty. To go and tell him practically removed the pain, and to go to him in any stress of feeling was her habitual impulse. She imagined herself saying: "I don't *reason* about it, you know, Clive; it's just that I *am* united to him; I just can't feel it to be otherwise." But the impulse was only feeble and soon vanished. She was more afraid of going to Clive than she used to be. "Better not tell him every time," she thought—"only just now and then."

Oliver stood near her, tender, anxious, uncertain.

"Don't be nervous to-morrow, Effie!" he said pleadingly.

To please him a great deal needed only such a little word. All his sad, anxious self-importance was so ready to be gratified: it had so strong a natural bias in favour of being gratified.

To see him thus was like watching a piece of paper

in the fire only just out of reach of the flame; one is bound to push it in.

"Oh, but of course I will be," she said, making her voice and eyes almost frightened.

"For me?"

"Well, just think! The things you are doing! How could one possibly help it?"

"Well, then, if you must—a little! But don't be too terribly anxious. *Really*, darling!"

Effie looked at him with feeling. Just pleasing him was not everything to him: even so, his chief concern was still for her.

She put up her hand and stroked his hair in her pity and feeling. But once embarked on that, she wished something would happen to stop her. She found herself hoping he would not like it because she must be flattening out his curls. But the hope came to nothing; she knew from his small, beseeching eyes and flushed face that he had forgotten the very existence of the curls.

"Poor Oliver!" she said.

II

Millie, with her cool, bright management of her husband, and possessing a wardrobe of exquisite imaginative dresses, and, just at present, her spare rooms occupied by visitors, felt consciously successful and happy. Her ideals were so definite and possible, and she never forgot to notice when one of them was accomplished.

She had visitors for the competition, and was pleased to be a hostess. Her servants were perfectly trained to make guests comfortable. Her dresses suited her magnificently and she knew her beauty was very perfect, astonishing people when they saw her first. Harry

was manageable—one only needed a little tact; in fact, he was really extraordinarily manageable.

"Harry," she said to him one morning as soon as she woke up, "we'll banish the dining-room clock, if you don't mind, dear." It was the day when their second little batch of visitors was to arrive. He was immensely excited at their having visitors; it made him feel more married. It was not an inappropriate time for her to secure the downfall of the clock that offended her. It was an elaborate gilt piece of work, with a gold boy, scantily draped, perched on the top between the flourishes. The little boy sat on his perch, and credit was due to the artist for having got his knees in quite different positions, thus avoiding any appearance of stiffness. His arms were stretched out to hold something; this object, whatever it was, had years ago eluded his elegant grasp, but he still held his fingers in an unnatural circle.

"I don't very well see how we can, dear," said Harry. "You see, it's just a matter of the possibility of Aunt May's turning up at any time."

"*Do* relations come from the other end of England without warning?" asked Millie.

"Well, she's very impetuous by nature," said Harry. "Very." He tried to establish this. "I remember mother telling me what an impetuous nature she had. There are all kinds of stories about her when she was a child. Amusing, some of them, very."

Millie warded those off. "I'm sure you won't mind, dear, if I make rather a point of its going. The housekeeping will be such a difficulty and such a labour this week; I'm anxious not to have anything on my mind, not even a tiny thing."

"A thing that's been in the family, you see, dear," said Harry, making a little fight because he so utterly approved of the clock there, "is not like a thing one

had bought; it's not even like an ordinary wedding-present."

In spite of the fact that there was no doubt that the issue of this argument would be in her favour, Millie began to feel greatly depressed. She expected Harry to give in more easily by now; he must have learnt that he would give in eventually, and yet he would persist in making just the same amount of futile resistance; that exasperated her. At one time she had been glad enough to be at the pains of an argument to secure in the end her will, almost enjoying the little tactful battle, with victory at the end. But, as we grasp a little more and a little more, she now resented that she should have to take the trouble of the argument.

"How many years will it take him to realize that he always gives in? I suppose he has never even noticed that he gives in," she thought impatiently. "He argues it out as if the issue were really uncertain."

She slightly turned her back on him in bed.

"Ah," she exclaimed in a low voice, "I'm afraid my head is coming on again." She suffered from a headache in the morning.

He was immediately solicitous and loving; but she lay quite impassive, her eyes closed, a little pale. When she did not reassure him or let him think that he was comforting her, and even made him feel, in her subtle, indefinable way, that her suffering was somehow a demerit in him, he was the most miserable and guiltiest man on earth. When at last she would take the slightest notice of him it was to say:

"I think it's partly talking like that."

Harry's contrition was intense; he could not even say much about it.

He was perfectly managed, so that was all right. She could have been quite sweet to him now but for a little circumstance which irritated and depressed her

more than ever—only a little thing, but strangely baffling to her sense of management.

Harry had luxurious bed-linen; it had been part of the proud equipment of his house. On some mornings, and this was one, Millie saw on his cheek his initials "H. F. A.," an impression taken from the bold embroidery on his pillow. She had that little feeling of personal aversion which no amount of tactful management could cure. In occasional moments like these her want of love found her out.

She stayed depressed while he tried to cheer her. When she answered him her voice was so low that it was difficult to hear.

"How many chafing-dishes have we got now, darling?" He knew how she liked her chafing-dishes.

"Four."

"And are they all full of good things for breakfast?"

"Of course I have seen to that."

"Oh, you clever girl; our breakfast will be so hot. Are you any better?"

"Yes."

"And will you wear your blue dress, darling, to-day?" he tried again; "just to please me." He said "to please me," but she knew he liked that dress just because it was the one she herself liked best.

"I suppose so."

"Last night you looked so exquisite; I could see they were all thinking about it."

"Well, I shall look like a hag to-day," said Millie, a little more cheerfully; she knew she would not.

"You are a naughty girl to say such a thing. I want them to see you in your blue dress; I like watching them looking at you."

"What an imagination."

"Imagination? I should like to see where the imagination comes in!"

"Well, we must get up or every one will be down before us."

"Yes, kiss me first."

She did so readily. It was the kind of kiss which just means better spirits, not more love.

When, later, she came down to breakfast, Harry was already there, awaiting her and their guests, and very happily and unnecessarily adjusting the little spirit-lamps, and fidgeting the chairs.

"Do you notice anything?" he asked after a minute.

"No," she said vaguely, always suspicious of showing any interest.

"Well, then you *are* an old blind lady!"

"Then all I can say is, being blind isn't so bad as it's painted."

"But just *look*, you funny darling!"

Her eyes, wandering round, rested just for a moment on the mantelpiece.

"Oh, yes, that's much better," she said coolly.

CHAPTER VII

I

"WELL, there's one thing, it's very nice weather, Mrs. Rutherglen," said Mr. Joynson at the door.

"Yes, it is," she said, "if only it keeps like it."

"It was their parting remark, as it had also been their first. Mrs. Rutherglen came back to the sitting-room creaking a little in her bodice. She had the air of a person who lacked only the final finishing touches to a hopeful toilet.

"I don't know that I shall ever buy brown boots again," she said. "They draw the feet."

Effie was in one of her excited moods, when she had to make an almost hilarious answer to anything that was said. Now she gave a sudden loud laugh.

"What does it mean, draw the feet, mamma? I simply don't know what it means."

"Well, dear," said her mother impatiently, "I really think sometimes you're almost stupid."

All remarks, which probably amused Effie exaggeratedly when they were spoken, lost their meaning for her in an instant. She could not concentrate on anything beyond just the time it took to listen and to laugh and reply.

Neither of them had a hat on, though their dresses somehow looked expectant of hats. Mr. Rutherglen came in and reminded them of the time. He merely threw it out, and meant to make no comment; it is so fine when facts which you have as it were made your own are perfectly pointed in the mere statement. He

did, however, weakly add: "But perhaps you don't want to be there for the beginning. *I* don't know what you want."

"For heaven's sake don't let's be late," said Effie, earnestly. "The awful thing is, father, that my hat doesn't properly match. Millie promised to send me over one of her hats, you see; it looks as though she had forgotten. I think it's simply *incredible*, the way some people are inconsiderate. Think of her exquisite hats, that she looks so beautiful in, and she can't spare me a single one." Tears had come into her eyes, which surprised her rather; it was strange that tears should keep company with the distinctly exaggerated words she had spoken, and not recognize how much more moderate was her feeling; she could not feel anything really keenly, with this excitement on her. Those tears had been easily deceived.

"But we won't be late because of that," she went on. "Fly, mamma, and finish yourself. And I shall go in a bad blue hat," she said gaily, "I who know as much about blue, I suppose, as anyone in this world."

She rushed to the window to see what carriage was approaching. Millie drove up briskly, with a sudden stop which swayed the high dog-cart on its springs, and drew the fine horse into a tense stillness, from which its muscles gradually relaxed. A man jumped from behind, and Millie came indoors. Effie ran at her to seize what she was carrying. "Oh, Millie!" she cried. She opened the box and took out the hat. A slight misgiving struck her mind. It was beautiful, but in a large brilliant way that gave her a doubt. "Oh, how perfect!" she said. "Thank you ever so much, Millie." With Millie she was always shy and polite and a little effusive, and perhaps getting more afraid. "How lovely!" she exclaimed with the doubt in her heart. She went upstairs.

"I'm afraid father can hardly wear that tie," said

Millie to her mother. She could afford to speak; she was perfect.

Mr. Rutherglen's hand went up to it. He almost felt its redness with his fingers, such is the power of criticism on a somewhat shaken mind. Sometimes one of Millie's visits upset the whole house, but never herself.

Millie went upstairs to where Effie was bending and tilting and flattening the hat on her head before the glass.

"Oh, Millie," she said with dismay, "do you think I look a tiny bit funny in it?"

Millie had gone to another glass, where she stood and scowled slightly at her own perfect reflection. She just glanced at Effie for a moment and returned to her engrossment.

"Oh, no," she said absent-mindedly, "I think you look rather a dream." Her voice was inflected curiously by her own personal concerns. When she first began to speak she was frowning and pushing a comb farther into her shining coil of hair behind, and her voice sounded dissatisfied. As the comb was adjusted her voice became relieved. Effie could hardly put much trust in such a reassurance as that.

"You look wonderful," she said, with covetous admiration. "I dare say Harry has told you that."

"Harry?" said Millie with a smile. "Yes, Harry has plenty of taste, it's true, but you see it's all bad. Still, as a matter of fact, he's a perfect dear," she said, stroking her hip. With her prosperity she had become rather more artificial in her speech.

She soon went off to join her husband and her friends at the lake. A little later the rest of the family set out, Mr. Rutherglen in a modified tie, and Effie in the hat about which she alternately greatly hoped and feared.

High tiers of wooden seats had been erected at f[illegible]

able spots of the beach. There were crowds of people, which gave a most foreign aspect to the place. The sun was a pale ball, very easy to look at; the pale misty sunshine was more in the air than on the earth, which it hardly changed; the light in the air, though gentle, was radiant.

Across the lake there stretched away interminably, between the mountains, a long valley made of flat smooth dark rock, cut up with narrow sharp seams, in which water sometimes caught the light. These seams took curious sharp shapes; they were like forked lightning in a sky.

But on this side of the lake there were fields which, photographed on to picture postcards and coloured a wonderful vivid green, passed for fertility.

Seated beside her mother, Effie kept sharp interested observation on all the life and movement round her. She heard Mrs. Rutherglen get into conversation with her other neighbour, and was pleased to be freed from the distraction of conversation herself. Mrs. Rutherglen's gratified drawl (she had assumed a voice and an expression, like her dress, for the day) sounded at her side; she sometimes heard the conversation.

"I suppose you have a lot of rain in the winter here?"

And her mother's reply:

"Well, that depends on the weather really."

Later she heard her mother say:

"One of my girls has flown away from me; I suppose mothers have to expect that. I wonder if you can make her out over there somewhere; if you should see anyone very tall, with dark eyes and a quantity of fair hair, you'll know. And if you should see a dark handsome man standing beside her, that would be her husband. This is my other girl. . . . No, not yet; but I suppose I can't expect to keep her long. She's just

twenty-one. They're dear girls," said Mrs. Rutherglen affectedly.

Effie did not want to be drawn into the conversation by these personalities. She elaborately pretended not to hear. She knew that the silly prattling woman at her mother's side was looking at her, and even for so uninteresting a woman's benefit she put on a lovely expression, much as her mother did, and, after giving a slight mental correction to her hat, felt satisfied of her own impressive beauty.

There was a sudden extra stir of sound, far and near, which sent a wild thrill to Effie's heart.

On the great jutting rock which thrust itself forward into the lake, and was so deeply black and dank that just from looking at it alone one could never know if the sun was shining or not, there came a solitary figure, which paused there.

From her distance below Effie could not see if it was Clive, Oliver, or another diver.

II

The diving began, briskly, silently, and enthralled the crowd. Once or twice a twist or an ungainliness in the fall betrayed a loss of perfect balance, and then for a moment terror leapt among the people. But a good diver can always regain his balance sufficiently to prevent disaster. There were about thirty competitors. The faces of the three judges were perpetually scanned by those who sat near to them. As they allotted marks on the papers spread before them their expressions were so impartial that anyone could confidently read his own opinions into such impassive features.

As Effie grew more accustomed, she was able to distinguish when Clive or Oliver dived. She could distinguish them when they stood still like statues on the

brink, and when they flew like birds through the air, and when they slid like seals into the water.

Once two divers left the great bleak rock together, and travelled not far apart, one with his head pointed to the water, and the other with his head and arms turned up and out as if he were going on a different journey. And one was Oliver and one was Clive.

Oliver's marvellous agile turns in the air made the crowd catch its breath, and there was always a general murmur and movement of relief when he reached the safety of the pale gleaming lake.

And once from all that vast expanse of people there came a clamour of noise. They have seen something so marvellous that the limited modes of human expression were nearly all called upon to express their wild emotion —talking and laughing and clapping and moving and shouting all went to make up that amazed clamour.

Clive had run from a high rock and flown into the air with his arms flung behind in a swallow-dive. His body refused to fall; it travelled on and on unnaturally, like a bird, for a good thirty feet outwards, until at last gravity had dragged it down and down from such an incredible uplifted flight, and the lake received him.

Every amazed mind, as it were, reasoned with him in those moments when he flew. "But bodies can't fly; they *have* to fall!" was the silent expostulation of the enthralled crowd. And he was drawn down; and they shouted.

Time went by, and a long plunging competition began to dull the interest of the people. The plunger entered the water from a low step and shot forward through the water, floating with his face downwards. When his breath was exhausted he brought up his face, his time was taken, and the next plunger started. A certain long monotony in these separate performances made the crowd soon tire. Neither Clive nor

Oliver was taking part in the competition, and their absence helped to dull it. The spectators stirred; friends greeted each other; and people began to move from their seats and to walk about the beach. Suddenly Clive appeared there among them.

He had finished diving and was dressed. Effie saw him standing on the beach surrounded by groups of people who all had their faces turned towards him. There were eager friends and admirers and hero-worshippers, and among them many women. If he detached himself from one group he was immediately absorbed by another. Effie did not take her eyes away from him for one moment; she watched every movement and look.

To every one who came he gave the whole of his attention. He drank in praise not in one great gratifying mass, but it was all separate and individual and precious. Effie knew well how utterly he had forgotten her. And that was hardly bitter; she had only to wait. . . .

One woman brought up her daughter—a beautiful shy girl who, from a burden of fine clothes, looked gently and worshipfully up at Clive. She must have spoken her bashful praise, for Effie could see that as he gazed at the girl there came stealing over Clive's face his beautiful humble deprecating look. It always stirred some kind of maternal passion in her to see that look with which such a being as he seemed to plead for indulgence.

Feeling suddenly an acute dissatisfaction with herself she turned away; she felt she wanted to hide herself, lest Clive's eyes should turn from that beautiful girl to her.

She knew why, and it was a relief at last to be certain about her hat. She knew all about it now; it was quite wrong. She knew about it directly she saw

Clive looking at that girl. She resolved to get rid of it before Clive should see.

In a large tent erected in the field she would soon be having tea with Mrs. Ingram, and Clive would probably be at her side. Before that happened she would go home and change her hat, and come again to meet Clive without this present uneasiness. She told her mother, and slipped quickly away.

As she took to the road she met some villagers making an anxious belated arrival. Her mind was full of its intense blind concentration on Clive. "Too late!" she addressed them in her mind. "He will not dive again." She passed them, and went on with other thoughts, never realizing how blind was her absorption in thinking they could only have come to see him—as a sleep-walker might resume his bed without waking and never know how he has wandered.

III

Oliver, clad in a long loose coat, climbed the steps which ran right round the rock. He was climbing behind, from where he could see nothing of the lake or the people. And here the steps were steeper and less smooth than in front; he had to go carefully.

He had dived well, he knew; but he was not satisfied. Clive also had dived well—and for Clive there had risen a burst and roar of sound which Oliver, standing on the height, had heard with as much dread and horror as if it had been the sound of the approach of some kind of articulate death.

At his distance all the sounds had been merged into one roar, as if it were a giant's voice from a single throat. A terrible voice, like death's—or, even more terrible, it was like the voice of Effie's love for Clive speaking. As he identified it with Effie he had felt maddened by its long soft roar.

Now he had to dive once more, to equal Clive's number. He would raise a mightier roar than that; that terrible voice of Effie's should speak louder. He knew what a power there was in him of love and skill and daring.

He climbed until he reached the Devil's Leap, and he came round to the front and stood there for many minutes. Below he saw the silver lake, and round its border there was a colour and a movement—the myriads of people. How they moved!—like ants on their heap. He resented impatiently that they should not be perfectly still.

And suddenly, as if by a miracle, it happened. They were turned into their own statues. Their colour suddenly grew whiter as their faces were raised.

The dive Oliver had to do was a porpoise-dive, with his hands flat at his sides. The fear experienced by some divers is over when they spring; with others, the fear flies with them through the air, and is only drowned in the water. With Oliver perfect confidence had always come the moment he lost his foothold. It was now only that letting-go that was the effort, the impossibility, the necessity. He knew that once in the air his heart would go free.

But how could he leave go, and how could he summon will to pin his arms to his sides?

He looked at that deathly stillness down below. One face was Effie's. How did he seem to her? He was so high that she must see him against the sky. Her heart was beating for him; her hands were clasped in dread. So he dared to do even this, and he let go.

After a terrible unnameable interval of time there was a loud splash. It was the first splash there had been that day.

The boat lying by on the lake picked him up, and he was dead from the blow.

IV

Clive, in a wild search, came upon Mrs. Rutherglen.

"Where's Effie?"

"She went home; she's been gone about fifteen minutes. She told me to be sure and tell you she was coming back if you were to ask. Have you seen him, Clive? What is he——?"

Clive couldn't wait. He sped along the road where Effie had lately passed. He had never in his life been so stirred by any feeling as now by his awe and shock. It would last him a lifetime, to make him a greater man, though now it made him less one—a man weakened and strange with pity.

As he reached the house he heard her voice from the window of her bedroom.

"What! Clive! Why, my darling!——"

That great incurable joy in her voice could have made him cry.

"I'm coming up to speak to you, my darling, my trust," he said.

He went up into her room and shut the door. In this moment before his revelation he knew suddenly what her demeanour would be; one often knows certainly just before, as it were through proximity to the occasion, though nothing in the past has told one. As he closed the door he knew what her grief would be, true and sedate and decent.

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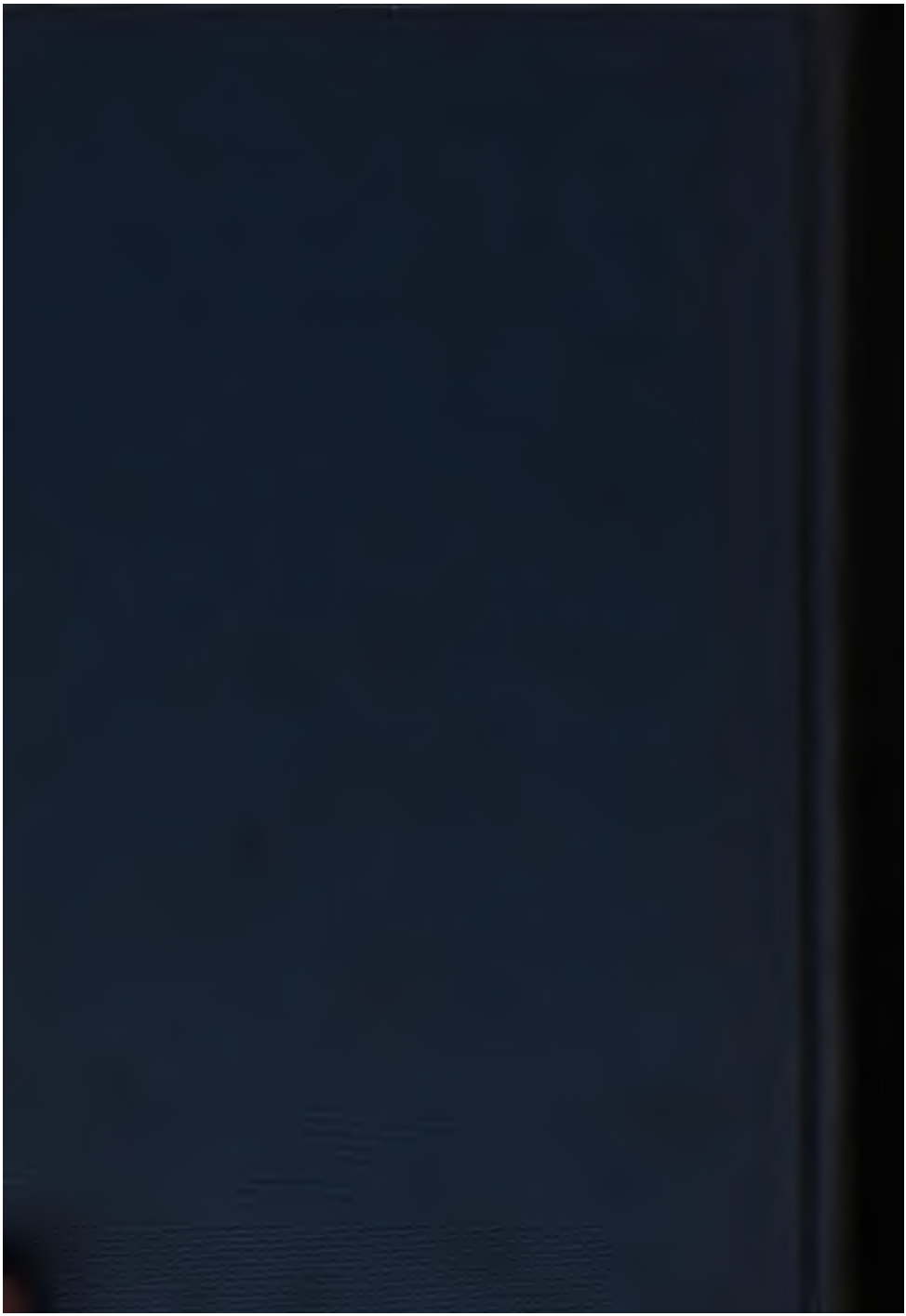
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